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*ANGEL*  
*IN THE SUN*  

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*JOHN BALCOM SHAW*

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# The Angel in the Sun

By  
John Balcom Shaw, D.D.

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“In very plain, simple and forceful language, always strictly in line with the teachings of the Word of God, Dr. Shaw takes up some of the questions as to the future life. They are asked and answered not idly, nor to gratify curiosity, but in a way to stimulate serious thoughtfulness.”—  
*Herald and Presbyter.*

# The Angel in the Sun

GLIMPSES OF THE  
LIGHT ETERNAL

By

JOHN BALCOM SHAW

*Author of "Life That Follows Life," "Vision  
and Service," "The Difficult Life," etc.*

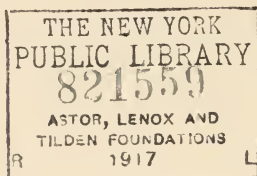


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*To Jack*





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# I

## THE ANGEL IN THE SUN

*“ I saw an angel standing in the sun.”*—REVELATION  
xix. 17.

THE difference between the ancients of the Orient and we people of the modern West is that they saw pictures and described them in poetry, while we discover principles and state them in prose. They talked about angels, flaming swords, and chariots of fire, while we are fond of referring to laws, forces, and, when we want to be particularly high sounding, phenomena and formulæ.

Pictorial and poetic alike is this symbol of the angel in the sun, but not so difficult to decipher as it might seem, if we will substitute principle for picture and translate its poetry into prose.

Here two distinct objects are brought into significant juxtaposition, one perfectly fa-

miliar to us and the other quite unknown. The sun is one of the few constant and abiding factors of our terrestrial life. Wherever we go, it goes with us. We may shut it out, but we can never leave it behind. It journeys with us. Without its accompanying presence, physical life would be impossible. An angel, on the other hand, we have none of us ever seen. We believe that such a being exists, but it is a fact which faith accepts rather than sight reports or reason concludes.

The sun represents the natural world, and the natural world at its best. To see it rise or set in all its majesty and glory, it might easily seem to be a thing of the celestial world, and not of this. So impressed with its grandeur were the ancients, that many of them bowed down and worshipped it. It is the material world at its closest proximity to the world ethereal.

The other object, the angel, stands for the supernatural world, and one might almost say the supernatural world at its lowest point. For what is the angel's rank but that of a

menial in the other world? "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" He is a spiritual but not an omnipotent or absolute being; holy, but capable of sin, as the fall of the evil spirits proves; and always a heavenly servant.

When, therefore, John saw this angel standing in the sun, he was looking at a point where the two worlds approached each other, the lowest in that and the highest in this; his eye was following the line where the natural and the supernatural come close together and are dependent upon each other.

Moreover, the angel was in the sun, the light of the natural world tipping his wings, illumining his face, gilding his whole being and thus calling it into prominence and distinction.

And "standing in the sun," his posture, instead of being one of inactivity and satisfaction, was indicative of alertness and energy, as if he were ready to move when the sun moved for fear he might otherwise forfeit its companionship and ministry.

How easily detectable the import of all this! What else was it intended to teach but the great, God-ordained fact that the natural and the supernatural everywhere exist together in the universe, and are immediately interrelated, the supernatural ever following in the train of the natural and the natural giving the supernatural its background and setting.

What John saw once in an apocalyptic dream we may see daily in our ordinary observations. Blake, the artist, once said that most of his countrymen, when the sun arose, saw a golden sovereign against the horizon, but he saw the Lord God of Hosts. If we were not so sordid and materialistic in our sensibilities we should see at every turn an angel standing in the sun ; we should behold in the midst of the material, everywhere, the supernatural.

The very sun itself is an evidence of this. Behold it rising out of the sea or up over a mountain, a thing of indescribable glory and power! Its rays fall upon the earth about us and transfigure it. We feel its warmth and



vitalization. But how are its light and warmth brought to us? How are its great fires maintained? What is the secret of its wondrous shining? When we are told that it is a huge gas machine, always shining because it never ceases to give off an ignitable substance that keeps its great caldron aflame; when the spectroscope photographs for us the chemical atmosphere that surrounds it; when we learn that its light and heat are transmitted by a mysterious and indefinable medium called luminiferous ether that no one has seen or can see, the angel is there; the supernatural looks out from the midst of the natural, the two so close together, so inseparably and vitally related that the natural furnishes the supernatural a background and the supernatural is the accompaniment and coronation of the natural.

Look within this human form of ours, and the same thing is confronted. I have a physical organism that can be explored and charted. Arnold Bennett calls it "the human machine," and a wonderful machine it is. But I do not get very far back into it before

I am face to face with the supernatural. The heart keeps the machinery running, but what keeps the heart running? It is wound up, but who wound it up? My mind is the seat of my life. What is my mind? Convolutions of gray matter like the calves' brains we have sometimes eaten? These are the media or instruments which are made use of by the mind when it would think, or plan, or give its commands, but they are not the mind. That is a thing unseeable and untraceable. When they examined Daniel Webster's brain they found far more gray matter than the average brain contains, but it was then only a cold, dead thing. Something had gone out of it. What was that something? Where did it go? Mystery.

Not less impossible is the explanation of my will's mode of action. I will to lift my foot, and out my foot goes. What has happened? The will has telegraphed its orders down along the nerve-wires to the muscles, and, the muscles obeying, volition becomes action. Something passed down those inner telegraph lines. What was it? Who knows?

No one has been able to analyze it. They call it life, but what is life? The angel standing in the sun; the supernatural pervading this body of mine and vitally related to it.

If the recognition of this fact had been wanting, the researches of modern psychology would have ensured it. What strange things have been brought into the light these last few years by modern psychics—mind reading, mental telepathy, soul communication, influence of the mind upon its own body and upon the bodies of others. The angel within us has simply come out and stood in the sun, where we could more easily see him.

Come with me into the biological laboratory and let us look over the shoulder of the learned man who is making his experiments there. His analysis has brought him as far back as protoplasm, but no farther can he get. What is protoplasm? We ask for a piece that we may examine it, and he laughs at us. He gives us his strongest microscope and bids us look through it. The sight is interesting, but not illuminating. We know no more about the initiation of life than when

we went in. Nay, we confess to knowing less. All that the biological investigations and experiments of the last fifty years have done is to emphasize and make indisputable the final, primal germ of life. It has led the angel out into the sun, where we could not mistake his existence or presence.

Linnæus, the famous botanist, said of an unfolding blossom: "I saw God in His glory passing near me, and I bowed my head and worshipped." Wordsworth had the same feeling in the presence of a primrose and exclaimed :

"Thou hast become to me the court of deity."

Tennyson saw the same angel and wrote these soulful lines :

"Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck thee out of the crannies,  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower—but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is."

Whatever may be our attitude towards evolution, its investigations have done much

to bring this angel of the supernatural out into the sunlight. It has revealed "the marvelous beauty of nature's work," to use John Fiske's phrase, but it has opened up a beauty lying back of nature itself; it has traced the hand of a higher force working in and through nature, and made it apparent that that force belongs to another and higher world. To quote John Fiske again—and I beg you to remember that he was the friend of Huxley: "Evolution does not remove the Deity to an unapproachable distance, but reveals Him as the ever-present God, without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, and whose voice is heard in each whisper of the conscience." Darwin never found the missing link, but his successors have found it, and what is it? The supernatural bridging the break between man and beast. They do not call it the supernatural. They call it "a force that makes for righteousness," or the "cosmic process" or something else, but, call it as they may, call it as we will, it is like unto an angel standing in the sun, whose form will grow in distinctness as science con-

tinues to throw more light on it. To quote from a great evolutionist : " Zoölogical man and the ape are closer than cat and dog, which belong to the same genus, more like cat and tiger, but when mind is considered we must erect a new kingdom, putting the ape at one pole and man at another."

Now, dear friends, will you tell me how it is that, though we are schooled to this combination everywhere else, and most familiar with the sight of the angel standing in the sun, we are so surprised to find the supernatural in the religious world that many refuse to recognize the presence of the angel altogether ?

To me it is more than bald inconsistency. Of course it is that, but it seems like spiritual perversion, if not, indeed, moral subversion. If there were any place we would expect to find the supernatural and be willing to acknowledge it when it discloses itself, it is in the realm of religion. There, in the very nature of the case, the supernatural would be not merely present but dominant. And yet nothing seems to irritate a great group of peo-

ple more than to be told that there is an angel standing here in the sun. Though some of us see him in the clearest outlines wrapped about with light, they stoutly deny seeing him and pronounce those who say they do subjects of hallucination or purveyors of misrepresentation. The Bible to them is no more inspired than Shakespeare. The cross marks the death of a great man but nothing more, and its influence is only that of example. The cradle has no halo about it, but the Bethlehem Babe who lies within it belongs to the same material world as the cattle that stand around it ; while the Arimathean's tomb, if it ever opened, let a posthumous influence out, and not a person.

And all this continues to be said, though the sun, as he climbs the heavens, lights up more and more the angel standing in it. The history of the Bible shows how much of Himself God put into it—inspiring not only its authors, but its copyists, its translators, and even its custodians, giving it a career of distinction and influence such as has been accorded no other book, and placing upon it a

seal which is unmistakable, incomparable, ineffaceable and unescapable.

The efficacy of the Cross grows more apparent every year. When millions on millions of souls are testifying to its transforming power it is a poor time to deny the presence of the angel in the sun. Christ's advancing sway over the hearts of men, greater than the combined influence of all the greatest leaders of the day, so enlarges the halo about Bethlehem's cradle and so increases the light which streams out from the tomb which was in the midst of the garden, that to deny His deity and to pronounce the virgin birth unlikely, and the resurrection incredible, is like affirming one's own non-existence or declaring it is midnight when the sun is shining from the zenith and it is high noon.

On the other hand, to see in the Bible the natural and the supernatural, in the incarnation God and man, in the Cross a source of efficacy and power, instead of being crass credulity, ignorant superstition, warped and weak prejudice, dreamy hallucination, is just what the recognition of the same combina-



tion in nature, in human history, in all life, and within my own frame is—unbeclouded vision and unembellished fact. I am sure I do not see wrong when looking down into the pages of the Bible, or back through the life and history of the Church, or up to the Cross of Calvary, or into the face of Jesus, the Christ, I see in clear and radiant outline “an angel standing in the sun.”

## II

### THE THRONE OF GRACE

*"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."*—HEBREWS iv. 16.

**B**OLDNESS in prayer, intimates the apostle, springs from the realization of three great facts, focalized in the word "therefore." The first reason for such boldness lies in the fact that it is a Throne of Grace which we are approaching. Paul is the first so to describe it, and it has proved the most attractive characterization ever suggested. For a considerable time the term Mercy Seat was the most popular with the Church.

"There is a place where spirits blend,  
Where friend holds fellowship with friend.  
A place than all besides more sweet —  
It is the blood-bought Mercy Seat."

But that is an Old Testament conception

and must needs give precedence to this, the New Testament representation. It emphasizes the attribute of God in which we chiefly trust when we come to Him in prayer—His mercy; and greatly does it embolden us to know that He is compassionate and forgiving. But the thought of another quality is even more essential to confidence. God's mercy to be effective must have sovereignty behind it. Sovereign grace alone can bring reassurance. And God's sovereignty, to attract and win us, must be gracious. Both conceptions are here in our author's picture, clear, distinct and impressive. It is a throne to which we come—stable, powerful, royal; but it is a throne of grace, kindly, friendly, benevolent.

It is in prayer alone that God's throne assumes this aspect. That is to say, this side of heaven. There, of course, it will never have any other aspect. To the redeemed alone God's sovereignty is ever gracious and His grace ever sovereign. But until then the throne of God is never the throne of grace

except to the one who prays. Out in nature what is it? The throne of majesty and awe. In all the language of the material universe, Huxley declares, there is no such word as pity. Back in the conscience of man what is it? The throne of righteousness—positive, exacting, relentless. “Thou shalt not,” or “Thou shalt”—an absolute, austere voice. In the final judgment what is it? The throne of justice. “According to the deeds done here in the body, whether they be good or evil.” But let a soul approach that throne in prayer, trusting in Jesus Christ, and it sees not the white light of judgment enveloping it as a cloud, nor the blue light of majesty and power lying upon it like a forbidding haze, but the crimson glow of compassion, forbearance, pity, grace, resting like a halo above it. A welcome awaits him when he comes. Kindly audience is given him. The petitions he presents are graciously received. He brings with him a draft which the court of heaven has issued against itself and must redeem, or forfeit its honour and credit. He comes to the throne not to see a book of ac-

counts resting upon it, or a scale of retribution sitting beside it, or a sceptre of power lying across it, but an open door and an unbarred stairway leading up to it, and a hand, warm and tender, outstretched to receive him. Fear, hesitancy, awe, speechlessness before such a throne? Impossible. The meanest, humblest subject in all God's universe may approach it in boldness.

A second reason for boldness is enwrapped in that word "therefore,"—the person and character of Him whom the suppliant beholds upon the throne. And who is it? We would expect to find God the Father holding the throne. But, no, it is Christ the Son whom Paul shows sitting in that seat. Our dealings are immediately with Him. Was not this the picture which Jesus Himself gave us? "If ye will ask anything in My name, I will do it," was His promise. In these words He seemed to claim absolute, if not exclusive, right to the place. It is as if He had said: "My Father holds the throne of the world's control, but the throne of prayer is Mine alone."

And in what guise is Jesus here represented? Not in regal aspect as we would expect. Strange as it seems, it is not as a King He holds this throne. Not as a conqueror, who exercises the power which a great triumph has accorded Him. No, it is as a high priest that He sits there. "Seeing, then, that we have a great high priest which is gone into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." Don't fail to get that. We make much of Christ as a Prophet these days—the Declarer of God's will, the Teacher of truth; also as a King who has won the throne of the world's admiration and acclaim, and is worthy of loyal obedience and submission; but Jesus the Priest is less familiar to us. If He is not a priest when you are before the throne, you are without the true vision of Him. True prayer, effectual prayer, is impossible without a recognition and realization of Christ's priesthood. He is there as a representative.

God's representative, first of all. It is the Father's throne, but He has given it to His Son. All that He may agree to do, the Fa-

ther agrees to honour. "And I knew that Thou hearest Me always."

He is also our representative there. Out of what kind of a past has He come to the throne? Back of Him as He sits there is an earthly, human career of struggle and suffering, which has given Him knowledge of man, interest in man, and sympathy for man. In the memory of that experience is He administering the throne of grace.

Therefore the side of His priesthood which the author would have us see and appreciate is not the sacrificial but the sympathetic side ; not His right to hear us and plead for us because of His death on the cross, but His ability, His capability as a prayer-hearer and answerer. And so, instead of showing us a picture of a high priest standing by the altar of heaven, He represents the high priest as sitting upon its throne. Sometimes the picture is drawn of the throne with the cross just back of it, sometimes with the shadow of the cross falling upon it ; but it speaks the truth far more precisely and eloquently to present that throne to us with Jesus sitting upon it,

clad not in the purple robe of royalty, nor the white toga of sinlessness, but in the scarlet garb of the high priest ; not now offering sacrifice at an altar, but dealing out favours from a throne. If, then, the friendly hearing, the gracious welcome we find at the throne emboldens us, how much more bold may we become when we recognize in Him who sits upon that throne a representative? No, better than that—a friend ; no, better still, a kinsman and a brother.

Oh, praying men and women, once get it clearly before your mind and heart that the hand into which you place your petitions is the hand that pushed the plane in the Nazareth carpenter shop, and was laid in healing and helping upon the sons and daughters of our humanity, as well as the hand that had the spikes driven through it ; and the freest, most alluring, most reassuring place in all the world will be the throne of grace. How clearly Horatio Bonar got the apostle's vision ! Among all the hymns of the Church, few paint a finer or truer picture than this product of his pen :



“ I see a Man at God’s right hand,  
Upon the throne of God,  
And there in sevenfold light I see  
The sevenfold sprinkled blood.  
I look upon that glorious Man,  
On that blood-sprinkled throne ;  
I know that He sits there for me ;  
That glory is my own.

“ The heart of God flows forth in love,  
A deep eternal stream ;  
Through that beloved Son it flows,  
To me as unto Him.  
And, looking on His face, I know—  
Weak, worthless, though I be—  
How deep, how measureless, how sweet  
That love of God to me.”

To be in favour at the court of heaven and to have a kinsman upon the throne one might think the acme of good fortune. But our author has enfolded still another reason for boldness in that word “ therefore.” It is what that throne has to give to those who pray. Two boons are held out to us, and it is easy to see how they include and embody every blessing we may come seeking. They are mercy and grace. Mercy, ordinarily, means compassion, and grace favour ; but

both words have higher meanings here. Spiritual help, discriminating, gracious, spiritual help is their synonym. Of the two, grace is the bigger word. Unfortunately the Church uses it less than formerly. Grace is the seed that grows the graces. It is heaven's dynamic operating on the earth. It is adapted omnipotence. It is applied divine energy. It is God's life transmitted to the believer. This is what we have handed out to us when we come to the throne. The author has given two or three touches here that light up the whole canvas with singularly striking effect.

(1) This grace is "grace to help," *succouring grace*. Weak and empty-handed men and women, ready to faint, overwhelmed with unworthiness, burdened with need, here is immeasurable, efficient, discriminating, adapted succour, and all to be had for the asking. Health, wisdom, comfort, holiness, peace, power, life—all conceivable good. No human need that cannot be instantly and adequately supplied. Can a man realize that back of Him who sitteth upon the

throne are the inexhaustible treasures of heaven, and be afraid to ask for the thing he needs?

(2) It is *adaptable grace*. This is expressed by the idiom, "in time of need." That means something specific, personal, definite. No misfits, no mistakes, no misapprehensions at the throne. Never in all the ages—think of it!—has Jesus made a mistake in diagnosis or prescription. Can you conceive of the countless number of requests that come up to His throne from all over the universe? Think of the thousands crying to Him at this moment! The throne is like a great telephone exchange into which millions of calls come, and where each is answered without a single mistake. Only believe this, brother man, and this great exchange would not, as now, be seldom used.

(3) Succouring grace, adapted grace, yes, and *timely grace*. That, too, is meant by the phrase, "in time of need," implying as it does promptness as well as adaptability. The tardiness of human help, as we have all had proved to us, is often its worst defect.

The antidote must act promptly or death ensues. The engine must heed the first call or the fire gets beyond control. The brakes must instantly work or the train be wrecked.

And there are times when undue haste is as fateful as undue delay. If the trip-hammer strikes before the iron is in place, the anvil may be demolished. If the train is ahead of time, a collision is even more likely than if it is overdue. Previousness and procrastination are neither of them characteristics of the throne of grace. The help needed is given both in time and on time—neither too late nor too soon. “Grace to help in time of need.”

Stand where this “therefore” brings these lines together to a focus, and see if you do not feel its force. Can you realize what the throne is, who is on it, and what it has for you, and neglect it as you so often do? Or will you doubt that your prayer shall have an immediate hearing and receive an answer that shall be prompt, personal, and fully equal to your need?

### III

#### SOWING OR STORING ONE'S LIFE—WHICH?

*“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but, if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”—ST. JOHN xii. 24.*

**T**HERE are just four things you can do with a kernel of wheat. First of all, you can waste it—grind it up into so much flour dust and cast it away. But that would be a thing unpardonable, of which no one but an irresponsible, either mental or moral, would be guilty.

Or you might consume it. That done, its benefit is largely physical and wholly temporary. It passes into the make-up of one's nerves and muscle and sinews, but must be succeeded immediately by the consumption of other grains of wheat.

Or, again, you may store it in a bag or bin for future milling or sowing. In which case its value gradually depreciates because

its vitality steadily deteriorates. There is not a farmer the country over who would not bear me out in the estimate that a bag or bin of wheat three years old is worth about one-tenth as much as one three months old.

But there is a fourth thing you may do with your kernel of wheat. You may plant it. And then what? It begins to decay, it continues to decay until it reaches a certain stage of deterioration, when in the most mysterious way it turns about and begins to revive, shooting up through the ground and moving on towards harvest, when it may yield thirty or sixty or an hundredfold.

Precisely those four choices, I take it, confronted Jesus when He came to live His active, responsible life; namely, self-destruction, self-gratification, self-reservation, and self-dedication. The first of these, self-destruction, addressed no temptation to Jesus Christ. Life was too high and holy a thing for Him to waste it. Never for a moment had this ignoble choice His consideration.

The second choice, self-gratification, presented itself to Him in the great wilder-

ness struggle where Satan sought to persuade Him to live His life after His own pleasure and for His own ends. And what response did He make? With one thrust of His hand He forever flung that suggestion from Him.

After that the choice lay between the last two—self-reservation and self-dedication. Shall I store my life or shall I sow it? Shall I lay it up for a future and perhaps a larger planting, or shall I lay it down in an immediate, absolute and unreserved surrender?

That was the question that was pressing itself for answer just at this time, and in the most dramatic fashion. Jesus was, as He supposed, wholly ready for His cross. His face was turned unflinchingly towards Calvary and His right foot firmly set upon the slope leading to its sacrificial summit. Nothing, surely, could now hold Him back.

When He was in this intense, determined, godlike attitude, there came the strangest interruption. Nothing like it had happened before. A little company of heathen had sought Him out and desired, demanded, to

see Him. What did it mean? Was it not providential? He had been to the heathen more than once, but never before had the heathen come to Him. It threw Him into the deepest reflection, and with reflection came a passing temptation to postpone His cross for a while. He saw back of that little company of Greeks great nations of people He had never visited, much less reached. How could He go to His death without undertaking at least a brief ministry towards them? Ought He not to store His life for a while, instead of going then and there to the furrow and planting it? "Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say?" We overhear Him saying, "Father, save Me from this hour." And then catching Himself, He instantly rebukes the suggestion: "But for this cause came I unto this hour;" going on to reason with Himself as only Jesus could have reasoned: "He that findeth his life shall lose it, but he that loseth his life shall find it unto life eternal. Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much



fruit." And lo! it is settled and settled forever. "Father, glorify Thy Son," is His confident, triumphant cry. Then, returning His face towards the cross and placing His foot again upon its rugged road, He climbs resolutely up its slope until its summit is reached, and then, stopping not, He climbs up on the cross, bearing with Him the sins not of the Jews alone but of the Greeks, and the Latins, and the Egyptians, and the Teutons, and the Saxons, and of all mankind, and pours out His great, rich, eternal life for the redemption of world-wide humanity.

And what harvest has the sowing yielded? In a hundred years, Corinth, Ephesus, Smyrna, Philippi, Thessalonica, all Greek cities, contained more followers of the Nazarene than the whole of His native land. In two hundred years more the cross was emblazoned upon all the royal banners of imperial Rome, a thing no longer of despite, but of regal, universal honour. In five centuries more, that cross had marched to the further end of Europe, had passed over the channel and set up its dominion on the

British Isles ; while through the centuries since that cross has gone on yielding its ever-increasing harvest, until to-day Jesus Christ is the joy and hope and inspiration and transformation of millions on millions of souls and as one has recently said, "Modern history is just His-story."

" Askest thou in exultation  
What the Cross of Christ has done ?  
Ask the splendours of creation  
If they feel the noonday sun.  
Ask reviving vegetation  
Springing forth on joyous wing  
If it feel the inspiration  
Of the breath-enchancing Spring."

This is what the choice to sow His life, rather than to store it, did in Christ's case.

Do not the same four choices that came to our Lord present themselves to us all ? Who is not addressed, at least in his early years, with the temptation to waste his life in some way or other ? And what countless numbers elect that choice. The drunkard—what is he doing but throwing his life away ? And the libertine—is not self-destruction his choice ?

The average life of a woman who gives herself to shame, we are told by experts, is less than five years. Fallen men may live longer, perhaps, but what sort of a life is it and what a blight and curse a man who has bartered away his arterial blood is to his posterity and indeed to all the race. Sixty per cent. of our hospital cases register the extent of that curse. Is there any choice which our young men and women should be warned away from to-day as the choice of self-destruction?

And upon what man that is human does not the second of these choices make its subtle attack? All men are born selfish. We are altruistic and benevolent and self-sacrificing only as we cultivate these graces. It is said that when Blücker came to London, after the battle of Waterloo, that he might see what the world's metropolis was like, among other sights which they showed him was the view from the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral. And the narrator tells us that when the distinguished warrior looked forth upon the expanse of thriving life, the blood came into his face, and, forgetting himself, he

exclaimed, "Oh, what a place for plunder!" That is what most modern men say when they look out into life. What can I get out of it?—of gain, advantage, pleasure, self-aggrandizement. Whereas we ought every man of us to say instead, What can I put into life? Beware, young man, beware of starting life with the second choice. Self-gratification means self-deterioration and ultimate self-ruin. As one of our great presidents said in a notable anniversary address, "Selfishness never keeps a centennial; it is too soon extinct."

But with Christian people the greatest temptation, usually, lies between the last two choices—self-reservation—not self-preservation; that is quite another thing—self-reservation and self-dedication. Shall I store my life or shall I sow it? For to a man who has met Jesus Christ and attached himself to Him, life is a thing so sacred, so potential, so vital, so eternal, that to waste or destroy it in any way or to any degree is an impossibility. He has met the first choice and resolutely rejected it.

And to such a man the second choice is quite as ignoble and therefore quite as unthinkable. No man that is a Christian could live unto himself. The self-seeker shows by his pursuit that he has never actually met Jesus of Nazareth. He and the Christ are a universe apart. They are antagonists, not friends. But, after both these battles have been fought and won, a man is on high ground. He is not prompted to reserve his life after he has stoutly refused to waste it or to expend it upon himself for his own benefit or advantage. He feels that by storing it for a while he may make the planting of it more fruitfully resultant when he does go to the furrow. And so he elects the third choice and goes to the bin instead and lays his life up for a future sowing.

But, according to the Master, the path to the bin is never a safe one to take and is never to be chosen by those who have undertaken to follow Him.

What temptation is more subtle to a young man of parts and training who is just entering upon his chosen life-work? He has al-

truistic impulses. He would make his life count for the most and he thinks himself above seeking to live for himself, but is not yet in a position to cast himself into the furrow. Wait till he is fairly started, wait till he begins to make money, and then your calls to service shall be answered and answered promptly and freely. As a matter of fact, will they be? The spring is the best time for sowing. For some crops the only time. He who is so tardy as to plant in midsummer or in autumn must expect neither early nor abundant returns. Let a man refuse to plant his life when he is young, and nine cases out of ten it will never get planted. When the money is made, the reputation won, the leisure secured, the disposition is likely to be gone and, perhaps, the opportunity absent.

And what a temptation is this to the active, driven Christian business man. He can do no more now than act as vice-president of one of your public meetings; he will do that and agree to be present and sit in the front row on the platform. You must be content

for the present with his liberal subscription. But don't ask him to do any work or make any sacrifices. He can give only his influence, his wealth, his name, while the pressure of business is heavily upon him ; but when the strain and stress let up as soon they are bound to do, he will gladly give himself. Ah ! man, ere long you will be so accustomed to the oft-traveled path to the bin that you'll not know where to look for the road to the furrow. Some lives see more than one summer, and the second, what we call the Indian summer, though short, is passing fair and mild ; but rare the man who is blessed with a second spring. Planting time comes but once and comes early in all our lives.

Does the Christian rich man escape the temptation? Mark the excuses he pleads. Or, if he offers no excuses, note the promises he makes. He is not giving away very much just yet, but he confidently plans to do so. He is canvassing the various objects that he may make no mistake when he begins to disburse his charities. He must be sure that

his family are provided for beyond the possibility of future want, and then he will feel that he has full right to give his possessions away. And then there is his will! That will more than redeem all previous omissions. Wait till that is read, and you will not call him close-fisted and selfish.

Yes, wait till you see his will and be sure to read it through. It will only prove his ruling passion to be strong in death. As the wife of the American miser described to me her husband: "He has so long cultivated the art of accumulation that he knows nothing of the opposite art of distribution." And he never will. When the dread summons comes, he will go out into eternity to answer for a stored bin and not a sown furrow. The harvestings of the latter he might have taken with him, whereas the returns of the former he is obliged to leave behind.

My friends, none of us are immune to this temptation. Whether young or old, whether busy or idle, whether affluent or destitute, the choice between self-reservation and self-dedication is never easy to make. I sometimes



regard it a more subtle temptation for the Christian worshipper than for any one else. What high thoughts we think, what impulses prompt us, what resolves we secretly enter into under the influence of the services of God's house. We dream dreams and see visions. It is holy ground. It is a mountain top experience. And we go away determined to be obedient unto the heavenly vision. We will not reserve our time, our energy, our resources, any longer. We will go to the bin and fetch all that we have been storing there to the furrow. Another night shall not fall till the last grain of it is planted. But it falls and the bin is still intact. The old habit got the better of the new impulse. The road to the bin had been too long traveled for us to make a new one so soon and so easily to the furrow. Thus some of us have been storing up our lives for years, always meaning to sow them but never fulfilling the meaning until year has quickly succeeded year and, instead of being mellowed, more generous, more kindly, more unselfish, more faithful as later life came on, we are found to be—possibly

we ourselves do not realize it—more stolid, more grasping, more unresponsive, more self-centred, and more unserviceable. What men and women we would all be if we had carried out one in a hundred of our good intentions, and gone to the furrow with our lives when only high stress and exceptional religious impulse was upon us. Turn now from this call that comes to you and move out into your future with not a stored but a sown life. And lo ! what will the harvest not be?

## IV

### WHAT JESUS CHRIST CAN DO FOR A HUMAN LIFE

*"The disciple whom Jesus loved."*—ST. JOHN xxi. 20.

FOUR times, at least, this clause recurs in the fourth Gospel. It is, as we are all aware, John's reticent way of referring to himself, and brings to the fore his two most striking characteristics: his extreme modesty, which would not let him so much as write his own name, and his exceeding loveliness, which drew to him the heart of the Christ and made him of all the twelve the Master's favourite.

But this is the John whom history introduces to us. It was quite another John that nature first introduced to Jesus. The man whom Jesus called away from his nets on Gennesaret and the man whom, three years after, He sent forth to help found His Church were absolute opposites. And how do we know this? From certain incidental records

that have come down to us. Who was it that, with his brother, asked the first place in the coming kingdom? John; and when the personal request failed they induced their mother to prefer it in their behalf. Nothing particularly modest or retiring in that, is there? But a forwardness and self-assertiveness that gets the condemnation of even this self-seeking age. To me this incident was typical, stamping John as by nature an ambitious, selfish and egotistic soul.

Then there was that happening down in Samaria. Jesus, 'to reach Jerusalem, had determined to go through Samaria, and had sent the disciples ahead to arrange for a friendly passage through that country. The Samaritans, because of their religious prejudice, refused this, and when the refusal came it so angered John and his brother James—they were both alike—that their instinct (mind you, I use the word "instinct," by which I mean their *natural* impulse) was to despatch these people on the spot. "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even

as Elias did?" What was that but an irascibility, a severity and vindictiveness which are the very opposites of the winsome and lovable?

Of a piece with these two instances was this word to Jesus in reporting their work: "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us." What narrowness and bigotry! Is it any wonder that Jesus rebuked them?

If we had no other data, however, the name which Jesus Himself gave John would be sufficient to determine the question. Boanerges, He surnames James and John—sons of thunder. Without doubt the name was descriptive, just as Didymus, Thomas' other name, Zelotes and Cephas, the surnames of the Simons, were, and indicates that John was originally of a vehement, fiery, impetuous temperament, the very antipodes of the John we know and love.

If this was all so, then what wrought so great a change? What so humbled this high-minded egotist as to make him hesitant

about giving his own name? What so softened this stern son of thunder that he became at length the grand old man of Ephesus, as gentle as a dove, as kindly as a woman, and as benevolent as an angel?

It is related that at one time Mrs. Browning, when sitting next to Charles Kingsley, ventured to ask him the secret of his character—a character which all who knew him enthusiastically admired and praised. His answer was, “I had a friend.” That is the answer John would give us. He had a wonderful friend. It was the young man from Nazareth. The two were young men together—Jesus and John. Jesus was only thirty when He met John, and John nothing but a lad, eighteen or nineteen at the oldest. Three years they spent in the closest and holiest relationship, Jesus giving John the place nearest Him, and John yielding Jesus the secretmost place in his heart and life. And with this result: that Jesus found in John His first favourite, His chief confidant and His best representative; while John found in Jesus the sweetener of his spirit, the trans-

former of his character and the saviour of his soul.

Three things that friendship did for John :

I. First of all, it eliminated the bad that was in him. This came about through a threefold process : training, the highest kind of training ; tempering and trepanning—the cutting out of the evil. It was a severe handling which Jesus gave John—discipline, heart-searching, hardship, self-abasement—but when John completed the course he was given the highest diploma. The irascibility, the stern and selfish nature was gone, burned up, put away, and he stood out before the early Church a calm, gentle, steadfast soul, a fountain of sweetness and light, the proto-saint of Christianity, and the finest illustration of what Jesus Christ was able to do for a human life.

II. If Jesus eliminated what was bad in John's nature, He also evoked all that was good within him, calling it into full exercise and giving it a degree of development that would never otherwise have been possible. In other words, John found himself, his truer,

larger, better self, when he found Jesus Christ. How else account for that philosophic fourth Gospel, that poetic, profound last book of the Bible, or those three exquisite letters that are as chaste in spirit as they are choice in style—all written by whom? A humble Galilean fisherman, with not only no literary antecedents, but no educational preparation. How else explain the genius of leadership afterwards shown by this man in the closing days of the first century? To what other cause refer his lofty self-control, his calm, strong serenity in the midst of the bitter persecutions that were afterwards visited upon him? As the repeated kiss of the spring-time sun will call what has long lain cold and dormant within the earth into life and bloom and fruitage, so the chrism of Christ's spirit awoke within this man his deepest, fullest capabilities, and gave these the largest fulfillment.

III. If Jesus' influence eliminated the bad and evoked the good in John's nature, it also endowed and equipped him with what he did not before possess and could not have had



from any other source. What did he thus get from Jesus?

(1) A new outlook into life Jesus gave him. Everything seemed different to him at the close of those years. God was different, more attractive, more beautiful, more lovable; the world about him had changed; he was not himself the same.

(2) A new purpose in life. Up to this time he had lived for himself; thenceforth the service of others was his passion and his pursuit. Jesus implanted within him a fountain of love, which flowed out into his own nature, fertilizing and enriching it, and overflowed in health-giving streams into other lives about him. Tune a harp to concert pitch, and every other string within sound of it will begin to vibrate with the same note. John's heart came so near to the heart of Jesus those years that it absorbed its warmth and learned its beat and rhythm.

(3) A new power for life. Jesus seemed to install a kind of spiritual dynamo in John's soul, capable of unlimited energy and enabling him to translate his ideals into fact, to

live his life after Christ's pattern, and to work mightily the works of God on the earth.

Out from this threefold process of elimination, evocation and endowment, John came forth a high, strong, well-balanced, noble soul, proving a joy to his Master and a staff and inspiration to his fellows. He leaped at once into the place of leadership, he was more and more respected, believed in, deferred to and depended upon, and when the time arrived for the kingdom to pass into the hands of a generation who should know Christ, not after the flesh as the twelve had done, but after the Spirit, John became the bridge over which the royal procession passed. Outliving all the other disciples, he came down well-nigh to the close of the first century, placing upon his pupils the stamp with which Christ had sealed him and thus setting the pace for the Church's life and work in the second century and in all the centuries since. So that to-day John's name is like the ancient vase that still retains the scent of the spikenard.

Men and women of like natural passions

with John of Galilee, I am here to remind you that Jesus Christ still lives, is more alive, indeed, than when He trod the roads of Palestine ; I am here to bid you remember that, since His triumphant death and glorious resurrection, since His ascent into glory and His resumption of His throne there, Jesus exercises greater power than when He was incarnate among us. I am here to declare to you what Paul emphasized for the Christians at Corinth, that they who know Jesus Christ in the Spirit may come nearer to Him and enjoy a more vital and intimate relation with Him than those who once knew Him in the flesh. And because of all this I speak the words of soberness and truth when I assure you that what Jesus did for John He can do, He stands ready to do, for you. Enter into a like friendship with Him, which is far easier for you than it was for any of those first disciples, and the same results will follow.

I. What is untoward and evil in your nature and mine Jesus is thus able to extract, as He did in John's case. And to whom does not such an assurance come like

a stream discovered in the desert? What one of us does not feel the need of such elimination? It is the very process we have been seeking for years, but without success. You have an evil bent of nature which you despise but cannot get the best of. You are a slave to circumstances or associations, and, try as you may, you are not able to break away from their tyranny. A habit has slowly grown upon you until you now feel yourself to be its victim. Oh, struggling men and women, fighting the odds and long since weary of the encounter and routed thus far in it, believe me—I speak the truth as it is in Jesus—a living, personal, intimate friendship with the Christ of to-day will correct all this. Not a loose, remote, indifferent touch; not a make-believe, abstract relation, but an actual, vital union of your heart and His heart, your spirit and His Spirit, that binds your will to His will in the closest bonds—such a friendship will extract the evil from your nature as effectively as it did from John's.

II. Come under this sacred spell, and the good within us never hitherto awakened and

unguessed as yet He will likewise evoke. Two things are truer to me every day I live. First, that every man is better than he seems. All of us have resources and capacities undiscovered by our friends and unrealized by ourselves that need calling into expression and exercise. And this, also, that no one finds his deeper, larger, higher self until he finds Jesus Christ. Great as were Socrates and Plato and Seneca, how much greater they would have been if Jesus had touched their lives! Was it not the touch of Christ which made Lincoln and Bright and Gladstone and McKinley what they were? Get this touch, my friends, and its effect upon you will be like magic. There is a legend of a mysterious musical instrument once found in the garret of a baronial castle. The musicians of the court brought it out and tried to play upon it, but could get nothing but the most discordant notes. One day a great foreign artist visited the castle and was shown the strange and seemingly useless instrument, only to rub off the rust, straighten and tune the strings, and make it give out notes that

sounded scarcely less than celestial. He was the maker of the instrument, and of course knew how to repair and manipulate it. Oh, men, what you need is the hand of the Master upon the keys of your lives, and then they will vibrate with the loudest and sweetest tones ; then, and not until then, will you be and do your best and fulfill the highest end of your being.

III. And the third effect will also follow in our case, the bestowment of the largest possible endowment and equipment for life. Jesus will give us the same elevated outlook into life, the same high purpose in life, the same unfailing power for our life, and we too shall stand forth before the world the proof and illustration of what Jesus can do for a man when once He gets a full chance. Do you want these things? Of course, you do. With your full hearts you long and pray for such a change. Remember, it hinges upon one only condition—real, living, constant, unfolding fellowship with the Christ of to-day. When that is yours, John's history will be repeated in you and through you.

## V

### THE PARALLELOGRAM OF LOVE

*“That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.”*—EPHESIANS iii. 18, 19.

IN that memorable night's interview, our Lord intimated to Nicodemus that the love of God was an infinite parallelogram, having four distinct though incalculable dimensions. Nicodemus may not have caught the suggestion. Many people do not see it even now. But the outlines are easily traceable. “God so loved the world”—the depth of God's love, its condescension. “That He gave His only begotten Son”—the height of God's love, its sacrifice. “That whosoever believeth in Him”—the breadth of that love, its inclusiveness. “Might not perish but have everlasting life”—its length, its continuity.

Paul worked the suggestion over in his

rich and deep experience until he came to state it as a definite proposition and here actually names the four distinct dimensions of that parallelogram: "That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ."

Christ began with its depth, Paul with its breadth. Is not the reason plain? A line extending downward vertically from you seems much longer than when drawn out from you horizontally. After the now famous Madison Square chimes were in place, the builder took me up into the tower to see how and where they hung. When we were way up among the bells he turned to me and said, "You are now on the fiftieth story. Look down." I looked down and from sheer dizziness almost fell down. The pavement below seemed so very far away. Then I looked up the avenue to a point about the same distance from me and it appeared quite near at hand. Looking down into the love of God baffles our finite minds, whereas looking forth upon its manifestation and application to



mankind its outline seems much more tangible and traceable. Jesus being accustomed to infinities naturally named the depth first.

I. The *breadth* of the love of God is its embrace, its outreach. How broad is it? It is as broad as the race. And how broad is that? Authoritative statistics tell us there are about a billion and a half of people upon the globe. A billion and a half, and yet God's love enwraps them all. But our human race is far wider than that, since

“ All that tread the globe are but a handful  
To the tribes that slumber in its bosom.”

Though all who have lived, are living now and will yet live upon the earth would count up into many billions, the love of God is so boundless and yet so discriminating as to take each of that vast number in and concern itself with his life and its interests.

But when we have reached the farthestmost limits of our race, we have not by any means compassed the embrace of the love of God. His love is far broader than that; it is as broad as the universe. And how broad is

that? So broad that it takes the light of the North Star not less than a half century to get to us. So broad that there are whole solar systems, the astronomers assure us, whose light never has reached us.

But God's love is wider than that. It is as wide as the nature of God, for His nature is love, love being not an attribute of God but the very essence of His being. How wide is the nature of God? "The fullness of Him that filleth all and in all." Who, then, can ever get beyond that love? It is a parallelogram that encloses the last and the least of God's children.

" For the love of God is broader  
Than the measure of man's mind,  
And the heart of the Eternal  
Is most wonderfully kind :  
But we make His love too narrow  
By false limits of our own,  
And we magnify His strictness  
With a zeal He will not own."

II. The next dimension of the parallelogram which he names is its *length*. The length of God's love is its strength, its surviving power, its ability to defy time, acci-

dent and every other contingency. How long is it? As long as every human life. Never does that love lapse, or waver, or weary, but proves itself constant and dependable from the moment we begin to breathe till we fall asleep in death. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end." Even the highest human loves often break down. A mother's love, perhaps, last of all, but many a mother has been known to desert her child. God with infinite patience follows us tenderly and lovingly throughout our whole life, and whatever may be our course towards Him He never changes His attitude towards us.

But the love of God is longer than that. It is as long as time, and that we are coming to believe is millions, perhaps, billions of years. Never since "the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy" has that love faltered or fluctuated, but has enfolded every individual life from its opening to its close, all through these numberless centuries continuing to be the same warm, gracious, vital, dependable, personal

outgoing of God's great heart to the children of men. Surely, the most learned among us has not sufficient mathematical knowledge to compute so great a force as that.

Yet the love of God is even longer than that. It is as long as eternity. And how long is eternity? When I was a lad a gentleman of our little village gave me an impression of the length of eternity which has never left me. He told me that if I would take each sand from the ocean's beach and carry it back to the hills and lay it down there, when I had got the very last grain removed eternity would have just begun to be. And yet God's love spans the whole of that vast, immeasurable space. What immensity! What infinitude! That side of the parallelogram as far outruns my imagination as it does my computation.

III. And next in the enumeration is the *depth* of God's love. By depth he meant its condescension, its down-reach, what it was willing to sacrifice, to endure, to stoop beneath in order to bless man. How deep is the love of God? Human sorrow is some-

times unfathomably deep. It is not only poignant but profound, dropping one's spirit so far down that it seems almost impossible for it to rise again. But however deep the experiences of life may go, always underneath us are the everlasting arms, down-stretched to sustain and comfort us.

Death is ever a deep reality. "As deep as the grave" is one of our common similes. "My baby's grave gets daily deeper to me," a grief-stricken mother said to me not long since. And I answered, "Yes, but the love of God keeps wrapping the little form about." Was I not right? "I am persuaded that neither death nor life . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Sin goes deep, incalculably deep. I heard a station dog barking furiously one night and not myself seeing anything that might occasion his agitation, I asked the agent what he was barking at. "At that drunk lying across the track on the grass. Don't you see him?" I looked and lo! he was right. The man was so far down that even a brute despised him.

Pretty far down is that, and yet not so far but what God's arm can reach down under him and save him, as indeed it has in the case of thousands of drunkards. Hell is deep, unspeakably deep, but God's heart will never cease to beat towards those who have fallen into it. They have sinned beyond His justice, but never can a child of God sin beyond His love.

“ Still Thy love, O Christ arisen,  
Yearns to reach the souls in prison.  
Through all the depths of sin and loss,  
Sinks the plummet of Thy cross.  
Never yet abyss was found  
Deeper than Thy love can sound.”

Who of us, tell me, can begin to estimate, much less to compute, the depth of this divine parallelogram of love?

IV. The last dimension to be named is the *height*. The height of the love of God is its upreach, its superiority, its perfectness. Height in meteorology is another name for rarity ; in physics for energy ; in chemistry potency ; in metallurgy brilliancy ; in character purity. God's love is absolutely pure,

having none of the imperfections that sometimes enter into our love. Human love is often selfish and sordid ; at times it is passionate or prejudiced ; at other times commercial or superficial. And in how many cases it is unreasonable and jealous, demanding of us more than we can give and suspicious as to the constancy and sincerity of the love we proffer. Not one of these elements ever enters into God's love. It is altogether free from taint and blemish. And here is the chief secret of its power. The purest human love is a mother's and that is why a mother's influence is the strongest that comes from an earthly source. God's love is as much purer than a mother's love than a mother's love is purer than a libertine's. Hence its marvelous power to redeem, ennoble and transform human lives.

This, then, is the infinite parallelogram of God's love. There are some tremendously big things in the universe. Space is limitless ; the atmosphere immeasurable ; time incomputable ; matter imponderable ; life indefinable ; force inexpressible. But the big-

gest of all, bigger than all of them put together, is the love of God.

How, then, can our finite reason comprehend it? We cannot, except in the sense that the apostle intended, which was, not that we should take it in and thus bound it, but rather hold it off and thereby get its perspective and realize its infinitude. It was not computation he enjoined but estimation; not realization but appreciation; as a matter of fact, not comprehension but apprehension, the Revised Version so translating it.

Such apprehension will work wonders. Any high love has mighty transforming power. Sitting in our church gallery, some years ago, was a simpering, giggling girl whose indecorum was a perpetual annoyance not only to the preacher but to all about her. I remonstrated with her privately, I referred the matter to her parents, once I actually stopped in the course of a sermon and openly rebuked her; but all was without result. One day without her parents' knowledge she married, and in due time she found a sweet and beautiful babe laid in her arms. As



those little eyes came to open and recognize hers, as sustenance passed from her person and maintained the child's life, as the first word those infantile lips uttered was an endearing name for her, a new and holy influence crept in upon her soul and she gradually became another woman, conspicuously strong, brave, and serious, as sweet and gentle a soul as her sex could boast of. What did it? The power of a human love, which, while noble and true, had still its limitations and defects. What will not a perfect love like that which issues from the heart of God, with no defects and no shortcomings, do? To apprehend it is to work not less than our complete transformation.

Paul, true to his method, does not stop here, but suggests the means or manner of such apprehension. He names three aids thereto.

The first is the work of the Spirit. "Strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." That gives us *capacity*, *susceptibility*, enabling us to recognize and realize the love of God.

Second. Jesus is given a distinct part also. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." That ensures *identity*. He sets up within us the evidence and witness of God's love, making it an inward experience, a felt reality.

Third. And a special office is here assigned to God, the Father. "That ye, being rooted and grounded in love." *Affinity* is the thing now produced. The love of God is made congenial and attractive to us. We are schooled to an appreciation of it, and given power to respond to it.

All this is a work *within us* and exclusively of God. In other words we cannot set ourselves to apprehend the love of God. All that we need to do is to admit God to our being and He will bring with Him into our consciousness and experience the evidence, the influence and the power of His love. The more we appropriate the life of God, the more shall we apprehend the love of God.

## VI

### WHERE THE LOVE OF CHRIST PASSETH KNOWLEDGE

*“ Therefore He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”—HEBREWS vii. 25.*

**W**ILL you let me take you with me at this time into the Bible Gallery, and point out to you a picture that has made a peculiarly beneficent impression upon me? The artist who painted it is unknown to us, hanging as it does in the section marked Hebrews vii. 25 ; but, whoever it was, he was a master and the subject he chose is an unusual one. Perhaps you may get a better first impression of the picture if I turn it end for end and let you see it thus : *“ Seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them, wherefore He is able to save unto the uttermost (that is, with absolute completeness) them that come unto God by Him.”*

Would that I might throw upon the picture the light in which I got my first full view of it. That was on this wise : In a meeting of ministers whose intent was the deepening of the spiritual life, one of the members, a veritable modern saint, arose and related this incident of his early life. One night, he said, when he was a boy on the old farm, he went to bed as usual in the open garret, and just as he was dozing off into sleep he heard a familiar footfall on the uncovered stairway. He knew quite well who it was, but he thought he would feign sleep and see what she might do. Slowly, on tiptoe lest she might wake him, she went to the other end of the long chamber, put her candle down upon the old-fashioned bureau, took a hard-bottomed chair that stood near by and, bringing it to his bedside, knelt down and buried her face in her hands. Never had his heart beat so fast or so loud, he declared, as it did that night. It seemed as if he must undeceive her by raising up in bed, reaching his arms around her neck and giving her a kiss that had more love in it than any he had

ever planted on her fond face. But he restrained the impulse, and, instead, she arose after the lapse of many minutes and kissed him ; and then carried the chair back to its place, took the candle and went down-stairs. But he did not go to sleep. It was long after midnight ere his drowsiness returned and all through those long hours, he told us, two great thoughts kept coursing through his mind and heart. The first was, with such a mother praying for me what manner of man I ought to become ; and, the second, I must see to it that nothing that I am responsible for comes between those prayers and their answer. He concluded the incident by saying that the memory of that evening had chastened his whole life and often since entering the ministry the thought of his mother's prayers had proved a source of inspiration and strength.

The incident set me to musing. My first thought was of Tennyson's words, in which, it is said, his reference was to his own mother :

“ Happy he  
With such a mother ! faith in womankind  
Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high  
Comes easy to him ; and tho’ he trip and fall,  
He shall not blind his soul with clay.”

Thomas Carlyle’s eagerness to keep himself under the influence of his mother’s life came to mind, an eagerness so practical that he went once a year to visit his mother’s grave and stood there in tender silence recalling her character and worth.

I also reminded myself of the course of the great American admiral who was tendered a complimentary dinner and when the time came for him to respond to all the speeches, lifting his glass of water, he proposed a toast to the one to whom he owed more under God than to any one else—his sainted mother.

Flashing into my thought came that Arab proverb which, if it be not quite sound in its theology, is profoundly true in its import : “ God could not be everywhere and therefore He made mothers.” And strange inhuman man would I have been if the contemplation of my own dear mother’s prayers and the

part their answers may have played in my life had not laid hold upon me.

“ When mother prayed, then all the air  
Grew tremulous with music rare.  
Oh, dread the hour when mother's prayer  
Breathes out no more her heart's fond care !  
For blessings rich from heavenly zone  
Came angel-like from heights far-flown,  
When mother prayed.”

But my last and lasting reflection, which has hallowed all my life since, was of the prayers of one who, like unto a mother and yet greater and dearer than a mother (“as one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you”), prays for you and me, not at any stated seasons nor for a brief period only, but who ever liveth to make intercession for us. It was this reflection, prompted by my friend's related boyhood experience, that threw a new light upon the picture I am now pointing out to you, and when this mellow, heaven-like light fell upon it, the same two questions which haunted my brother-minister's soul that night began to knock loudly and persistently at mine,

namely these: First, "With such prayers being lifted for you, what manner of man ought you to be?" And, second, "Can you let anything for which you are responsible ever come in between you and the answer to those prayers?"

With this light now lying upon the picture before us, may I ask you to gaze into it—not a passing glance such as hurried tourists accord a famous masterpiece in a European gallery, but a fixed, searching, soulful gaze—as I turn your cicerone and try to call your attention to some of its masterful details.

I. Note, first, if you will, the *posture* in which the artist represents the interceding Christ. He is kneeling. Strange posture for a throne. Monarchs are accustomed to sit or stand when upon their throne. But this King is kneeling. He is a King, the King! It is not the Christ of Galilee we see in the picture. Often did He kneel in prayer. But this is the Christ of glory, the triumphant, reigning Christ. He is exalted now. The days of His humiliation are over. He has returned to His glory and the in-



habitants of the celestial world have hailed and acclaimed Him; but, upon ascending His throne, it is as if He laid His crown aside and put His sceptre by and, getting down upon His knees, begins there as the King of Kings to pray—for you and me. If

“ Satan trembles when he sees  
The vilest sinner on his knees,”

how must he tremble when he sees the King of glory on His knees.

II. Mark, too, the portrayal of Christ's *passion* in heaven—it has infinite import for you. Zinzendorf once said that his passion was Christ. Who is Christ's passion? According to this authority, and it is the best, you are. For whom is Christ ever living to make intercession? For you. You are His first concern. The universe is His charge. Ten thousand interests claim His thought, but His uppermost yearning is for you and me.

“ In every dark, distressful hour,  
When sin and Satan join their power,  
Let this dear thought repel the dart,  
That Jesus bears me on His heart.”

III. And scrutinize closely the stroke of the brush that calls into distinction Christ's *practice* in heaven. Prayer may be an act, a habit, a temper, or a practice. It is all four with the Christ of glory. He ever liveth to intercede. That is His unceasing pursuit, His constant exercise. Prayer is His practice—absorbing His thought, engaging His energy, moving His entire being, occupying His whole eternal life. Could such prayer fail to prove effectual? What comfort and courage should I find in the contemplation of a perpetual intercession like this!

IV. And the *principle* underlying His intercession is here strikingly represented. *Intercession*—any schoolboy can cut the word up into two, *inter* and *cedo*, and tell you its meaning is “to go between.” Going between what? God and my sins. Why, that is cross work; that is what Jesus did for me on Calvary. Just how He did it I know not. The explanation of it cannot be stated in any human theory. But the fact stands and will stand that in some mysterious but vital way Jesus Christ that afternoon when

He hung up there in the supernatural darkness passed between God and my sins. And is that what He is doing now? Is there a cross in heaven? So it would seem. He is still interested in our atonement and giving Himself up to the task of securing it. This is as difficult to understand as His sacrifice on the cross, but none the less vital, necessary and effective. What an infinite price He is paying for our salvation !

V. One last feature of the picture I bid you notice—the *purpose* which the artist has painted into it. Why this ever-living intercession? This strange posture, this one commanding passion, this uninterrupted practice, this continuity of principle? That He might “save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.” That redemption might be a perfect work. That the cross might be a consummate success. That He might do His best for those whom He came to seek and save. No partial result will satisfy Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Nothing less than a full and final victory will fulfill the soul-travail of the Captain of our

Salvation. When at last He shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father, He would present us "holy, and without blemish and unblamable before Him." This is the great eternal purpose of His intercession in heaven.

Now, tell me, having gazed into and scrutinized this wonderful picture, are not your thoughts and impulses those my friend experienced before his mother's prayer and I repeated when the meaning of our Lord's intercession first broke upon me? Have you not been saying these same two things to yourself?—First, I must be worthy of these prayers; and, second, nothing for which I am responsible shall ever come in between these prayers and their answer?

Then while you are in this mood will you, still gazing into the picture, answer three questions I would put to you?

The first question is this: How does any man's unconcern for his personal salvation look in the light of this picture? If it is of such importance to Jesus Christ that He makes it His innermost passion and utter-

most pursuit in heaven, can it be of no importance to you or me? Think of its being always on Christ's mind and seldom on ours. Contrast the burden it lays on the heart of the Redeemer of men and the lightness with which it sets upon the hearts of men themselves. Can any man afford to neglect "so great salvation"?

And this is my second question: Who of us would be willing to become responsible for the frustration of his Saviour's prayers? If they are ever frustrated, we alone shall have to bear the unending, immeasurable blame, for nothing but the will of man can keep the combined will of the Eternal Father and the Eternal Son from coming to pass. "And I know that Thou hearest me alway." Why? Because God's will and Christ's are identical.

Years ago, in driving over the Rockies by an unusual route into Yellowstone Park, I stopped for the night at a rude hotel that was a rendezvous, so soon as the darkness came down, for the trappers and adventurers from miles around. That night the ringleader among them attracted me. His

profanity was colossal, but his personality arresting. Next morning I sought him out and got him to talk. He was a Canadian—roving, reckless, brilliantly wicked. “Whatever led you out here?” I asked. “There was nothing to tie me to my home, and I began to drift, and I have kept it up till here I am lost in this country and as good as dead.” “Is your mother not living?” “If she were, I’d not be here a day longer, sir.” “Well! let me venture a guess. That your mother was a chaste and beautiful Christian?” A great tear stole out before he could arrest it and he replied, “My mother was the best woman God ever made.” “Then let me guess again. That your mother died praying for you?” His control gone, the tear dropped to make way for another and many another as he answered: “Yes, and the memory of her prayer follows me wherever I go.” “And will you, can you, dare you be responsible for the failure of your mother’s prayers?” The arrow had done its work. He fell under its impact. “No, sir, I cannot and will not.” Later that morn-

ing when I left him, he took my hand and promised to go back to home and honour and honest endeavour after God and holiness. Even that coarse, dissipated, blasphemous ruffian could not consciously turn his back upon the prayers of his mother.

But it is infinitely worse to take upon one's self the responsibility for the failure of a Saviour's prayers. Let us beware lest we gradually settle back into that position.

My third question is even more penetrating. Who can hold out against such a manifestation of the divine love as that pictured here? This is where the love of Christ seems to me to pass knowledge. I can understand, I think, though of course only faintly, how Christ when He beheld our lost estate should find it impossible to remain in glory without seeking to reclaim us. And I can in some little measure appreciate how, when He came to realize that the road to Calvary meant blood tracks all the way, He would still be driven on irresistibly to the goal of His redemptive purpose; but I cannot imagine the feeling which impelled Him,

after He had regained His throne and resumed the crown of His exaltation, to disregard both and go to His knees in behalf of those for whom He had done all that a God might be expected to do to redeem them, and thenceforth to live to make intercession for them.

This would seem to be Paul's estimate, for he puts it last, as if it were the climax, in the classic that closes the eighth of Romans. "Who is he that condemneth?" he asks, and then answers his own question by saying: "It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Is this not what he is saying? Great is the condemnation of the Dying Christ; greater that of the Risen Christ; yet greater that of the Ascended Christ, but the greatest of all is the condemnation of the Interceding Christ. That I believe to be a love that no man, however hardened or base, can deliberately, consciously, willfully close his heart against.

When I was but a lad I heard a story—all



church people have heard it by this time and probably oft—that made a tender impression upon my young heart. A home had taken fire and when at last the firemen had emerged from the building supposing all were rescued, it was discovered that the babe of the family circle was missing. The mother was frantic and when the firemen refused to reënter the flames she rushed into the condemned house and by dint of an awesome effort managed to get the child to an upper window where it was taken from her flame-enwrapped hands. The child was untouched, but the mother was so scarred that when her hands were healed she donned gloves and wore them ever afterwards. Always accustomed to the habit, the babe grew into girlhood and never asked the reason till a schoolmate called her attention to her mother's hands and she went home to ask for an explanation. "It is high time you knew, my daughter. Come into my room and I will tell you." Then her mother recited calmly, modestly, the story of her rescue. And when it was ended the girl did what any of us, man or woman, would

have done. She buried her face in her mother's drawn, deformed hands and, weeping great tears upon them, she exclaimed, "Oh, mother, I thought I loved you before, but I love you a thousand times more now."

Oh, beloved, as Jesus Christ lifts those scarred hands up to the Father in intercession for us, who of us dost not say :

"If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now" ?

## VII

### A TEST OF FAITH

*“ And it came to pass, after these things, that God did tempt Abraham.”—GENESIS xxii. 1.*

**T**HAT word “tempt” has staggered thousands. The Revisers removed a good part of the stumbling block when in their version they substituted for it the word “prove.” Better still, certainly more up to date for us, is the word “test.” Read it thus, “And it came to pass that God did test Abraham,” and it removes it at once from the category of the extreme into that of the ordinary, if not the commonplace. There is nothing man is more familiar with or insistent upon than this same process of testing. Human creators, as modern manufacturers might well be styled, never give out their products till they have been thoroughly inspected and officially passed upon. The smallest steel needle as well as the most complicated engine ; a spool of cotton as

much as the most costly fabric, must submit to this treatment. Products that meet the test are stamped with a trade-mark, which is the firm's guarantee; those failing to meet the test are rejected and either marked as seconds or, if possible, brought up to the standard.

As the value of the product rises, the examination is sharpened. The least flaw discounts a diamond. A telescope lens is subjected to all degrees of temperature and light before it is allowed to pass muster. And before an automobile is given a body, it is put into the hands of an expert and driven about for hours and sometimes days.

Suppose a firm gets into the habit of sending out uninspected goods? Confidence is broken down. Its trade-mark ceases to have value and sooner or later it is bound to go to the wall. And the same thing holds true in the intellectual world. A college that is lax in its examinations soon robs its diploma of all value. Unless the bar associations kept up a high legal standard and medical boards maintained a stiff contest for their licenses,

the world would be flooded with pettifoggers and quacks and both professions would seriously suffer. Life with us is also full of moral tests. Bank clerks are always on probation, some banks keeping tab on their movements at night and dismissing any man who is seen entering a saloon or discovered with bad companions.

How, then, does God's testing of Abraham look in the light of such human procedure? Is it unusual? Does it seem cruel? Is there anything unkind about it? What else could God have done? What was He seeking to make of Abraham? One of the three great patriarchs, the progenitor of a mighty race, the father of the faithful, the founder of the nation from out of which the Messiah was to come. Only a man of the highest type who was equal to the severest testing could have filled so lofty an office. Suppose he had loved his son Isaac more than Jehovah, would he have been the man God was looking for and needed for this place?

God has the habit of testing all His creatures, whatever their rank or order. The

wind shakes the trees out upon the hill crest and only those whose roots are fastened deep and strong survive the gales. All the others go down. What is God doing? Making a sturdy forest. The frost creeps along the ledge, dislodging all soft and brittle rock. The tougher strata, having defied the attack, will live through a hundred winters. What is God's purpose? He is rearing the everlasting hills. No sooner does plant and animal life appear upon the earth than He introduces the law of natural selection. Carnage and murder are everywhere. It all seems most cruel, but is it actually so? Sir Oliver Lodge, the famous scientist, answers the question when he says that all this has made a better world for us to live in than could have come in any other way. Shall the Creator cease to be painstaking and thorough when He reaches man? Shall He let down the bars for the highest order? Should He not, instead of that, put the bars farther up? What did He set out to do when He made man? To place upon the earth a race that should bear His image; that should

have dominion over all lower orders ; and should come at length to be His eternal companions and equals. Surely here is the place for His severest testing. Unless it is insisted upon His aim will be wholly frustrated. In the end it will be impossible for Him to pronounce this part of His creation good.

This is the explanation of His permission for sin to enter. And what Sir Oliver Lodge said of the benefit accruing to the material world through the struggle for existence among the lower orders, may possibly be said of the spiritual profit to man following from his conflict with sin. God will have a better race in the end than He could have produced under other circumstances. His image in man will be more distinct and ineradicable, and humanity prove itself more worthy of its Creator.

Why are Christians not exempt from trial ? Why are those who are seeking to do His will often more buffeted than their less deserving neighbours ? Why is that saintly woman so repeatedly afflicted and that godly family so constantly in difficulty ?

Goodness must be proved before it can be pronounced such. The stronger the man or woman may be, the sharper must be the test. If a bridge is to carry only foot-passengers, it need not be subjected to a ponderous weight before it is opened for traffic ; but let it be a railroad bridge over which great trains are to pass, and every brace and joint must undergo the severest testing.

If God did not try His saints, it would show that He did not expect much of them, or could not place much dependence upon them. Sore trials are a compliment, if we did but know it. We should not seem to amount to much in God's sight if they were not sent. Some one has put the right and wrong of the matter thus :

“ ‘ Hast thou a sorrow ? ’ saith the tempter bold ;  
‘ It shows thy Father hath forgotten thee.  
Renounce thy faith ; thy trust in Him withhold ;  
Would One who loves afflict so grievously ? ’

“ ‘ Hast thou a sorrow ? ’ faith saith to my soul.  
‘ It shows thy Father seeks thy betterment.  
Ask Him so to direct it and control  
That thou mayst gain the blessing with it sent.’ ”



Who are the sweetest and strongest persons among your acquaintances? The pampered and indulged, or the people whose way has led them through much perplexity and hardship? It is the digger who achieves, the climber that attains. The vessel that has the heaviest load always sails the steadiest, the pansy-bed oftenest picked that blooms the best, the crushed geranium whose fragrance is wafted the farthest. And the men and women whose characters are the chastest are those whose hold upon the temporal and earthly has been so dislodged by repeated wrenches that the only thing they have to cling to is the eternal, and their hold upon that is close.

As clear to my memory as if it were only yesterday is my father's injunction as I was starting out with our prized pony one day for a long hard ride. "Drive with care, my boy," he said, "and remember that a level country like this is harder on a horse than if it were hilly."

God knows that a level life is not the best for character, and so He casts up a hill now

and then. They are not easy for any of us to mount, but every hill we climb takes us to a higher level and will bring us out at length upon "the Eternal Plains of Peace."

## VIII

### THE EVIL EYE

*“ Him that hath an evil eye.”*—PROVERBS xxiii. 6.

I HAVE a whole string of “ evil eyes ” at home—flat, green glass beads, on each of which is painted a big black and white eye. They were bought under the guard of three policemen at a stall in Hebron, where Abraham lies buried, now inhabited exclusively by Moslems who hate the Christians and whenever they come into their city seek to do them bodily harm. These beads are worn about the neck to keep the evil eye off, it being believed that, if but one glance of an evil eye fall upon a man, some curse forthwith ensues. A wretched, haunting superstition, but what more could you expect from Mohammedism ?

Solomon believed in the evil eye, referring to it repeatedly in the Proverbs. Moses did,

too, for he gave a law concerning it. And Jesus spoke twice of the peril of having an evil eye.

The evil eye which Christianity recognizes, however, is not the same thing as that a Mohammedan is afraid of. It does not need to be *kept off*, but to be *put down*. It casts its curse inwardly, not outwardly. It is not the possession of another but of one's own self. Our fear, therefore, must be that it shall look out *from* us rather than that it shall look *upon* us. Jesus put it in this way: "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man."

This evil eye is of three kinds.

I. The first is the *red* eye—the eye of lust and passion. Our Lord had this in mind when He declared that a look was sometimes tantamount to adultery. There can be no greater curse than to have to look out upon the world through an eye of that colour. All life then seems an inflamed and unholy thing. And the light that comes in through it wears a foul track across the brain and in-

duces a fever within the heart which nothing but a miracle can remove. Nay, psychologists say that it cuts a groove through one's inner being which after a time it is impossible to fill in and level over. There is only one alchemy which will turn a red eye white, even as there is but one that will make a crimson heart like snow, and that is the blood which cleanses from all sin. God save our growing boys and girls from developing a red eye!

II. The second of these evil eyes is *green*. It is the eye of jealousy. Shakespeare gave it that name.

“ Oh, beware, my lord, of jealousy !  
It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock  
The meat it feeds on.”

And the Saviour referred to this kind of an eye when He said : “ Is thine eye evil because Mine is good ? ”

The green eye looks hatred and malice. It snaps with ill will. It distorts the image of him upon whom it is fixed, magnifying his faults, dimming his merits, and seeing defects and blemishes that do not exist at all. But

its look does not harm the person to whom it is directed ; in the estimation of fair-minded and right-thinking people, it gives him distinction. Its intended blight reacts upon the man who gives the look.

Of all the traits to be hated and shunned, jealousy is the chief. Its effect is to narrow and vitiate the soul. It is the mother of a foul progeny—murder and crime, calumny and blackmail are all its full-fledged offsprings. It sears the conscience, warps the judgment, sours the spirit, and blunts all of the delicate sensibilities. The man who looks through such an eye bids an eternal farewell to happiness and enters into a state of misery. "Jealousy is as cruel as the grave," declares Ecclesiastes, and it is more cruel to one's self than to any one else.

And yet jealousy, accursed though it be, is as common as covetousness and as self-perpetuating and persistent as pride. Society women by the scores are jealous of each other. Merchants entertain it towards competitors. Lovers easily fall into its toils. Milton in "Paradise Lost" pronounces jeal-

ousy "the hell of injured lovers." And even preachers sometimes become a prey to its ravages. Pray every day you live, whatever your position or work in life, to be kept from a green eye.

III. Another kind of evil eye is *yellow*. It is the eye of greed and mammon. It comes from looking too long at gold, or its reflection. Many of us never see more than the reflection, and yet we are afflicted with the yellow eye. There are, as we all know, a good many wall-eyed people. Alas! the number who are world-eyed. "Myopia" Peter calls it—"not seeing afar off." That is, blinded by the near-by, the material, temporal world all about them. Their sin is secularity. The unseen, eternal world lies outside their vision completely. Tourists after a few days on the desert find their eyes reporting inaccurately. Professor Ralf, of Cairo, told me that the reason why the delicate blues and greens prevail in the colour schemes of the ancient tombs is because the Egyptian believes the last ray of the setting sun, just before it drops below the

sandy plain, is green, and its first ray upon rising is blue, and he uses the first and last rays of the sunlit day to symbolize eternity. The inflamed eye of the tourist, being disordered, abnormal, often cannot detect the delicate green and blue hues, but sees the yellow rays. In like manner secular people become so blinded by greed and gain as to fail utterly to recognize the realities and beauties of the unseen world about them.

Solomon diagnoses this difficulty. "He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye." Not he that has hastily gotten rich—that man has troubles of his own, but he that hasteth to get rich. The pauper is as subject to the temptation as the millionaire. It is the desire for gain, search for the seen, a passion for the things of time. How it flattens out the soul and renders all the finer sensibilities sordid and coarse.

This was Jesus' true word about it: "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body is full of darkness." No spiritual ideals. No heavenly visions. No exalted aspirations. No holy communings, but just a blank,



dense darkness lying over the whole spiritual world.

You know the confession which Darwin made down near the end of his career regarding his musical nature, how he once enjoyed music, but having allowed his nature to become materialized, the sensibility was atrophied, and at last he could not distinguish between harmony and discord. So do men lose the power of vision.

As if the yellow eye were contagious, Solomon gives the injunction of the text : "Eat not the bread of him that hath the evil eye." Not tainted money, but tainted bread, which the money buys—it is that which is infected with microbes. Associate with secular people, instead of choosing your companions among religious folks, is his word, and you will catch from them the yellow eye—you will grow sordid and covetous yourself.

"I believe I am getting the pink eye," said a lady to me the other day in alarm. I was half tempted to reply, for she was just that type of woman, "You are getting something

worse than that. You are developing the yellow eye." An American priest once remarked that the sin which had been confessed to him by the least people was covetousness, but he believed it should have been confessed by every one who had come to him. I fear all of us have developed some form of the yellow eye. It may be but slightly coloured, only in its earliest stages, but it is sufficient to throw a secular haze over everything we see.

Suppose we have the evil eye in any of its forms, is there any remedy or treatment that will cure it? Surely a string of beads will not do it. Not even a rosary. The cross will do it, but not any material symbol of the cross. The German adage, "The cross will profit thee nothing, unless it be set up in thine heart," is preëminently true; and so is its converse:—Set up the cross in thine heart and it will profit thee everything. The blood of Calvary will wash any colour out of our eyes and give us a true, clean vision again.

There is no evil eye that can look a curse

into our being, but there is a great good eye whose glance brings virtue to the being of him who receives its look. It is the eye which Hagar saw. "Thou, God, seest me." Let a man live in the consciousness that the eye of God is upon him, and he will be adverse to jealousy, ashamed to be lustful and afraid to be avaricious. Mitchell, the astronomer, used to tell of an incident in his life, which burned this consciousness indelibly into his heart. One day as he was experimenting with his telescope, he saw two boys climbing over the fence into an orchard four miles away. Again and again they gazed in all directions to see if any one were in sight and when they were fully reassured, as they supposed, they clubbed the apples off the trees, filled their bag and sneaked away, little supposing that some one was following their every act from a distance and saw all they did. "From that day," says Mitchell, "I lived under the conviction that, from whomsoever my deeds might be hidden, God saw me, and the thought hallowed all life to me ever afterwards."

The vision of that all-seeing eye will do much, but something mightier than that is offered us. God has promised to set His almighty eye within us ; to replace our evil eye, in other words, with His great good eye. "I will guide thee with Mine eye," is the promise. In my parochial rounds some years ago, I was calling on one of our aged women and, upon inquiring about her health, she told me with great depression of spirit that she was fast losing her eyesight. "Oh, sir," was her pitiful confession, "I shall soon be totally blind." That was too much for the daughter who sat beside her and, stroking her hand softly, she instantly broke in : "Never mind, mother dear, I will be eyes for you." That is God's assurance to us, and, given His view of things, of life and death, of God and man, of time and eternity, one shall no longer see with distorted and coloured vision.

But the great good eye does even more than arrest, restrain and guide us. It looks virtue into our souls. "Jesus turned and looked upon Peter." That was not a look

of rebuke, nor merely a look of love, but a look of grace. Peter's restoration began with that look. Oh, brother-man, open your being to the gracious look of Jesus. It will penetrate your conscience, pass back into your heart, steal into your will, search and sanctify your whole being, and give you a new nature to look out from and a new eye to see with.

And what will admit that needful look? The right look from us. Lift to Him the look of faith, and He will look His grace into your soul.

## IX

### GREATER THAN THESE

*“And greater works than these shall he do, because I go to the Father.”—ST. JOHN xiv. 12.*

**T**HIS is, perhaps, upon first sight, the most startling utterance Jesus ever made. With our great respect for His life and deeds, which we are accustomed to put into a class by themselves, it seems wholly incredible that anything we do could by the most liberal reckoning be pronounced in the least degree greater! And yet this, without any qualification whatsoever, is His bald statement.

One's first impulse is to look upon it as hyberbole—exaggeration. But any such interpretation is perilous. There are other promises here, given upon this occasion and in almost the same breath, which would have a question mark placed after them if this were to be our explanation: “If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it;”

"I go to prepare a place for you;" "I will come again and receive you unto Myself;" "I will send you another comforter." If one is to be accounted hyperbole, what is to hinder all from being regarded as such? Evidently this is one of the sayings of Jesus that calls for long and prayerful pondering.

Years ago, after having experienced much perplexity regarding it, I turned aside to give it special study and consideration, when a light broke upon it which quite dispelled for me the shadow resting hitherto upon it. I could better say, I think, a light broke through it, for some of its words stood out into prominence as transparent objects will do that have a candle or an incandescent light placed behind them. And with these thus emphasized the meaning of the utterance became clear.

I. The first part to be illumined was the *things here compared with*. Before this I had made much of the comparative and the things compared. "Greater" had been the mountainous word. The works which we could do loomed up before me in surprise and quite absorbed my attention. But now it was the

word "these" which riveted my attention. "Greater works than *these* shall he do." What were the *these*? The works He was doing then and had just been doing. Had He been referring to the work of the cross which He was about to do—atonement, propitiation, substitution—He would have used the word "those." His cross was ahead of Him and was, therefore, excluded from the reckoning. "These" must have referred to His life-work, and not at all to His death-work.

What was His life-work?

Healing. By the working of miracles, or otherwise relieving man's distresses.

Ministering. Doing kindnesses to people—comforting, cheering, strengthening poor, tired humanity.

Teaching. His subject-matter being Deity and humanity. What God was and what man may become. Under the latter head, teaching men duty, responsibility, opportunity and accountability. And this healing, ministering, teaching, had one object and goal, the reconciliation and return of man to God.



This was Christ's life-work, and all that He did falls into these categories.

Does not this understanding of it light up the utterance? Is it not easy to believe that the successors of Christ have been able to do greater works of this character than did He? Not better works, of course. That He did not say or mean, but works greater in number and extent.

What of the work of healing? Christ healed a few scores in His lifetime. The modern hospital, prompted by the Gospel and essentially a Christian institution, heals hundreds in a day. What of the work of ministering? He touched in all His lifetime but a handful of people at the most. To-day the charity of Christians ministers to millions on millions of bodies and souls. What of the work of teaching? His services were almost exclusively to His own people, an insignificant nation with but a small population. Only twice did He pass over the borders of His own country, one of those times refusing to address the people among whom He came. And when He died, He had, upon the most

liberal estimate, only five hundred followers. To-day, wherever the sun shines, His followers are teaching and preaching the Gospel. Count up the students in Christian colleges, the children in all the Sabbath schools of Christendom, the millions of people who gather weekly to hear the Gospel, the thousands addressed in the parks and upon street corners, and who can fail to accept as simple fact the statement that greater works than He did in His lifetime His disciples are doing?

He won five hundred disciples in all, but on the Day of Pentecost, through Peter's preaching alone, 3,000 were converted. In 1877, in the Lone Star Mission in India, 10,000 were baptized in thirty-five days—nearly one-half as many in a day as it took Christ thirty years to win.

II. Light came through a second place in this utterance; it lighted up and caused me to see, as I had not done before, the reason which Jesus appends to the promise, "Because I go to the Father." What was involved in that journey? The crucifixion

to start with, with its redemptive work and its atoning achievement. Jesus in His life-time worked without that. That with us is an accomplished fact and a mighty dynamic and dependence.

What else did His journey to His Father involve? His ascension and thereby His assumption of the throne, thus enabling Him to guide the affairs of men and marshal the forces of His kingdom as before He had not been able to do.

Also the procession of the Holy Spirit. "If I go not away, the Spirit will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you." And with the Spirit's descent, there came to man a power of the greatest magnitude. Yes, Christ came back in the Spirit, and continued to work with His disciples. Have you ever noticed the last verse in Mark's Gospel: "And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following." So that in reality it was not they that did the work, but Christ working with them and through them.

And one other thing—intercession. He went to the Father by the way of His cross to resume the sceptre, to send the Holy Spirit, to come back to the earth as the Spiritual Christ, and also to begin His intercession before the throne in heaven, working there for them as in His name they worked for Him on earth. Put it thus: His atonement meant that Christ was to work *behind them*, giving them a basis, a motive, a dynamic; His gift of the Spirit meant that Christ would work *with* them, enabling and empowering them; His intercession meant that He would work *for* them, pleading for them above; and His coming back and dwelling within them meant that He would work *through* them. This was Paul's thought when he said: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Do you not see that when Jesus declared that we should do greater works than He had been able in His lifetime to do, He was in reality saying that as the spiritual Christ, who was to be active both in heaven and on earth, He Himself would do greater work

than, as the Christ of the flesh, He had been able to do? We are a small and insignificant factor in it all. He is the one that does the work. Working behind us, above us, beside us, within us, through us, of course, greater works are possible than He found Himself able to do in the days of His circumcision and humiliation.

III. And there was a third place where the light shone through this Christic promise that day, and it has continued to shine through it ever since, namely, the condition upon which Christ based the promise. The explanation of these greater works He located in the fact that He was going to His Father; the condition of our doing them was that we believe on Him. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me, the works that I do, shall he doeth so." Not he that believeth *in* Me, get that clear. That is another thing. It would be simply accepting His veracity, taking His word as true. But the condition is "he that believeth *on* Me"; he that defers to Me, trusts in Me, depends upon Me. He whose faith links him to Me

and makes him one with Me, "The works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these."

That puts the whole truth a little more plainly and positively. It identifies the Christian worker with Christ, and makes Christ his heart, his spirit and even his right hand, until it is not he who does the work, but Christ Himself. This is what happens when a disciple starts out to work for Christ through faith in Him; Christ is appropriated, brought into the man's life, given residence in his heart, set upon the throne of his being, until He becomes within the man the hope of glory and the power of time, and he can say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." Under those conditions, is it not possible to see how we can perform greater works, greater in number, influence, extent and achieving power, than could be done by Jesus, when as the restricted man of Galilee He was on the other side of the cross, the riven tomb, the Day of Pentecost, and the Intercessory Throne of Heaven? It is to

me. And with the light shining through these places, the whole saying is illumined for me, and takes on a rational and credible aspect which appeals to me with likely and winsome grace, where before it startled and perplexed me.

One homely, practical word, please, before we close the Bible upon this now illumined verse. Or should I say, before we turn again to the world, carrying its illumination out with us? It is this. Christ has met and fulfilled His conditional part of this great promise. Have we yet met and fulfilled ours? He has gone to the Father, though the journey exacted the greatest cost from Him. Up Golgotha He went, down into the tomb, out through the granite wall of the grave, up through the skies, and back to the earth again in the Spirit. All to give us a basis to work on, a motive to work from, and a power to work with. What is our conditional part? Just "believing on" Him. Going nowhere, doing nothing, suffering naught, paying no price; but just standing where we are and lifting our faith,

dependently, surrenderingly to Him. Until you do that, attempt no work for God or man. It will be a mockery and prove in vain. But be sure you do that first, and all Christian work will be alluring, easy, blessed, fruitful.



## X

### THE QUESTIONS OF JESUS

*“ And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.”—*  
ST. LUKE ii. 46.

**W**HAT were those questions, do you suppose, which Jesus put to the doctors that day in the temple? Were they questions of doctrine? What the law and prophets had taught concerning the promised Messiah? Or questions of conduct? What a perfect son of God such as He was endeavouring to prove Himself to be might do and what not? Or were they questions of experience—psychological questions, as we would now speak of them? What the strange consciousness which He had already begun to feel welling up within Him might or might not mean? We do not know. Perhaps we never shall know.

But we have the record of certain questions which Jesus did ask during His life—

time, and the record is invaluable. These questions, according to my count, number just one less than a hundred—ninety-nine in all. Do you say that is a large number? To me it is an exceedingly small number. The sayings of Jesus, exclusive of the record of His doings, have recently been published and make a volume of three hundred and seventy-one closely printed pages. That would put one question on every fourth page. At such a rate the compositor's font would be slow to run out.

But this number, small as it is, must be largely reduced by certain necessary subtractions. For example, Jesus often put what are called rhetorical questions—interrogative in form but not in intent. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (St. Mark viii. 36) is one of this sort. As it does not call for information, but was used solely for the sake of emphasis, it and others of its class must be omitted. There is a second group that must also be excluded—what I would call expletive questions, put to arrest attention and

pave the way for a solemn statement to follow, as, for instance, "Whereunto shall I liken this generation? and what is it like?" And still again, several exclamatory questions, as they might properly be named, must be barred from the list, such as, "Have I been so long time with you, Philip, and yet hast thou not known Me?" (St. John xiv. 9) and others likewise expressive of some intense emotion.

When such subtractions are made and allowance had for repetitions, we have left just about a baker's dozen, thirteen or fourteen. Inexplicably few had it been any one but Jesus. How necessary to us is the interrogation from a social view-point. Little progress would we make in conversation were we denied it. Is it less essential from a literary outlook? We depend upon it more than upon any other form for variety and perspicuity of style. What of the psychological demand for it? How do I prepare a sermon or write any composition? I put to my mind all sorts of questions about the subject in hand and then arrange and weave together

the answers thus elicited. And what progress would pedagogy make without the question-mark? Instantly our class-room doors would close never to open again.

And yet Jesus seldom used the question-mark. And the omission, instead of being strange, was to have been expected. What did He come to earth for? Not to *get* information, but to *give* it. Why was He among men? On a tour of inspection? No, on a mission of revelation. Whenever He wanted knowledge, or wisdom, or counsel, He went to its first source, and if we had a record of His prayers, we would probably find they were made up almost entirely of questions. "Father, I have come to this new turn in the road; which direction should I take?" "Father, what is Thy will concerning Me in this matter, or in that?" We have the record of only one such question—the mysterious and awful cry upon the cross: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Try to put yourself in Christ's place as a questioner, and you will see how far the interrogative was denied Him. Could He ask

any questions that called for information about God? Verily not, for man knew little of the Deity and He knew all. Had He not come to the earth to reveal God to the inhabitants thereof? Could Jesus consistently interrogate men about the other world? He had been there and they had not. Information about others—could He ask for that? Did He not know men better than did their fellows? He was the great mind-reader, the great searcher of hearts. One such question He did put, "Whom say men that I, the Son of Man, am?" But it was of the rhetorical order, propounded not for inquiry but effect. Could Jesus ask men in any honesty about themselves? "He knew what was in man," and translated it long before any words could have given it utterance.

What, then, was left? Very little. He could inquire for men's frames of mind, states of feeling, and attitudes of will, and then only when He wanted to commit them and put them on record; when it would do them good to declare their faith or register their decisions. As a matter of fact, an analysis of

these questions yields us precisely this result. They are heart-searching questions, and addressed well-nigh exclusively to the will. This is the way they divide themselves :

Category one: Those intended to elicit from men a statement of their estimate of Jesus. "What think ye of Christ?" "Whom say ye that I am?"

Category two: Questions that evoke a declaration of men's faith towards Jesus. "I am the resurrection and the life. Believest thou this?" "Dost thou believe that I can do this?" "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

Category three: Inquiries that seek to elude a confession of men's feelings towards Jesus. The best example of this sort is the question Jesus addressed to Peter after his fall: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?"

Category four: Interrogations intended to commit men to a definite, open attitude to Jesus. "Will ye also go away?" "Wilt thou be made whole?"

What, then, is the sum of the matter? These two facts: (1) All of Christ's questions

had reference to Himself. Through them He sought to determine the relation men held to Him. (2) The object of every question-mark was confession, commitment, open, outward declaration. And the inference to be drawn from these two facts no one can mistake. They are all-important. They go to the very core of things. They uncover to us the inmost heart of the Gospel. Write them in letters of gold.

Religion, as Jesus conceives of it, is a personal relation between a man and Himself. Luther got it right when he said, "Our religion is a thing of personal pronouns." And Gladstone was in front of the same truth when he wrote, "The longer I live the more I am convinced that Christianity is not a credal statement, nor a church affiliation; Christianity is Christ." No one ever gave this with better expression than did the saintly Zinzendorf when he said that he had but one passion and that was Jesus Christ.

Cognate with this is a second conclusion from a study of the questions of Jesus, namely, that He is content with nothing less

than a man's open declaration of his attitude towards Him. He would put us on record. He insists upon outward, even formal commitment, and for good reason. A faith unconfessed is an unworthy, abnormal, evanescent faith, if indeed it is faith at all. A love afraid to let itself be known soon loses all power of utterance. The passion that is reticent and secretive is like the pond without an outlet—soon growing stagnant, and eventually drying up.

Jesus is soon coming back to our earth. What questions I shall want to ask Him then! "Lord, how did sin get into our world?" "Why was it let in?" "How long shall it be allowed to stay in?" "Will there always be a corner of the universe in rebellion against the Creator, or will God some day reign supreme?" "Lord, did other worlds also fall, and was the cross a necessity for them?" "And what of the mystery of Thine own Person, Master?" These and multitudes of other questions I shall want to put to Jesus.

But has He not explicitly said, "In that



day ye shall ask Me nothing"? And why? Because He shall first question us, and all else shall wait upon the answers we give Him. Will not these be the interrogations He shall address to each of us: "What was your estimate of *Me* on the earth?" "Did I come first in your thought and life, or second, or last?" "What was your faith towards *Me*?" "Did you believe in *Me*?" "Not simply in the inspiration of the Bible, or the eternal punishment of sin, or the all-sufficiency of the cross; but did you believe in *Me*?" "Did you believe on *Me*?" "What was your inmost feeling towards *Me*?" "Did I hold the highest place in your heart or was *My* place secondary?" "And what was your attitude towards *Me*?" "Did you confess *Me* or deny *Me* before men?" "Did you openly ally yourself with *My* disciples, or did you content yourself with secretly following *Me*?"

These shall be Jesus' questions then, as they were His questions in the days of His flesh, and upon the answers we shall make to them the character of our eternal future shall depend.

## XI

### THE EXCLAMATIONS OF JESUS

*“ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.”—ST. MATTHEW xxiii. 37.*

ONE naturally approaches a study of the exclamations of Jesus with two definite presuppositions. The first of these is a confident expectation that they will be found both frequent and numerous. There was so much to shock and grieve this Visitor from heaven, who had been accustomed to a totally different attitude towards God and quite opposite conditions of life, that we might well look for repeated outcries of His soul in the presence of it all.

And would not this second expectation be also entertained, namely, that His exclamations in the midst of so much sin and woe, coming as they did from one schooled to a holy and blessed life, would be of the

minor key, expressive of pain, pity, protest or condemnation?

But these presuppositions, it is interesting to note, prove unwarranted when the actual facts become known. Instead of largely outnumbering His questions as we might presume, our Lord's exclamations are far fewer. There are in all but thirty-five exclamation points in the whole text of the four Gospels. Any one acquainted with biographical notes or public speech will at once recognize this as most exceptional. But, even then, these marks do not each of them, by any means, point an actual exclamation of Jesus. Many of them punctuate the sayings of others, or set off single words which are used for emphasis, as lo! woe! behold! His recorded outbursts of feeling, as a matter of fact, do not exceed seven or eight in number—unparalleled in the history of the world's teachers or speakers.

And the other of these presuppositions is as ruthlessly swept aside. Excluding His woes against the Pharisees and other flagrant offenders, which in the strictest sense are not

exclamations at all but mature and deliberate denunciations, and barring also those uttered on the cross which broke from His lips when He was in the anguish of His passion, our Lord's glad, exultant exclamations far outnumber those of the opposite class. What hope in man, what recognition of his true worth He evinces when, seeing Nathanael approaching, He exclaims: "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile!" The same spirit appears in His exclamation, "How much is a man better than a sheep!" as also in this striking utterance which, if it had not leaped spontaneously from His heart, would have probably been put less bluntly: "Behold, My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother."

Certain conclusions are pressed in upon us by these facts regarding the number and character of the exclamations of our Lord.

(1) Jesus was evidently aware of His problem when He came to our earth, showing as He did no evidences of disappointment or

surprise. Things were as He expected to find them and He was prepared to face them.

(2) He must have had a magnificent hold upon Himself to be able to remain calm and brave and steadfast amid the varied and distressing conditions which everywhere met Him—a poise which has never been equalled in all the history of the leaders of men. That very poise stamped Him as above men.

(3) What regnant optimism characterizes His thought and conduct. His hope is never once dimmed. His certainty of triumph never fluctuates. He is always sure of Himself, confident as to His dependence, hopeful of results, certain of final victory. In no other way as in and through His exclamations did Jesus so clearly prove that the joy of the Lord was His strength, or was the prophet's forecast of Him so abundantly fulfilled: "Thou hast anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows!" His optimism was so well-founded, so genuine, so consistent, that the worst our world had to offer could neither baffle nor blur it.

There are four records of Jesus under in-

tense emotion that serve as a key to all His exclamations.

I. The first of these is before us in St. Mark vi. 6: "And He marveled because of their unbelief!" Again and again it is said that the disciples marveled at Him. And how could they have done otherwise? His character, His works, His utterances, His spirit, had no parallel and could not have done otherwise than evoke amazement.

But here, and once or twice elsewhere, it is stated that Jesus marveled at those about Him. In this case at their unbelief. Not the unbelief of the populace or their leaders,—that did not in the least surprise Him. He had not looked for faith in them. He marveled that His townsfolk who had known Him all His life, and supposedly were believers in Him, should be so warped by religious prejudice as to account Him an impostor and drive Him out of their city.

Again He marveled when His disciples, close companions of His for over two years and not merely His understudies but the sharers of His secret, proved so impotent

in the presence of the epileptic lad that the boy's father taunted Him with their failure. This seems to have stirred Him to the depths and called out that heart-wounded exclamation: "O faithless and perverse generation! How long shall I be with you! How long shall I bear with you!"

The unbelief of those closest to Him! This drew forth, apparently, His most intense expressions of feeling. What suggestion, what warning finds point and emphasis here. If He was chagrined and saddened by the unbelief of His friends and followers then, what must be His feeling in view of our far less pardonable unbelief? Take into account the perspective we have of His life, the history of His conquest in twenty consecutive centuries, His overtowering character, the sway of His teachings, His influence over men of our time—is it not a thing for us to marvel at, and how much more He, that His origin is now so widely questioned, His authority repudiated, His leadership spurned and His call unheeded? If He was only occasionally

overwhelmed by men's unbelief when He was on earth, one might think that such must now be His constant experience as He contemplates the unbelief of our times.

II. The record which gives us a key to the second group of Christ's exclamations recurs frequently in the Gospels. Twelve times it is narrated that Jesus "had compassion on the multitude." And by compassion is not meant such a feeling as you and I ordinarily have towards the unfortunate—a superficial, passing, unbefriending pity; but a deep and poignant sympathy that evoked and enlisted His entire being in the behalf of those bound in sin or burdened with distress. In this group we have His two laments over Jerusalem which, even to-day as we read them or hear them read, bring an ache into our hearts, if not actual tears to our eyes:—"If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes," is the first of these. And the second is still more heart-rending:—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou



that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" The deepest anguish of soul finds expression in those outcries; and with these must be coupled His exclamatory prayer upon the cross, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do," which shows His ruling passion to be strong in death—a burning, consuming desire to emancipate men from the thralldom of sin and woe. This passion is ever breaking out into intense words, now as a prayer and now as an appeal, now in soliloquy and now in public address. Do not these exclamations lay bare to our sight the sympathizing heart of Jesus and make it easy for us to believe the Apostle when he tells us that we have a high priest that can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and that He ever liveth to make intercession for us? What sources of comfort and fortitude life's tried and burdened souls may discover, then, in the exclamations of Jesus!

III. The third group of our Lord's exclamations is suggested by such a record as that given in St. Matthew viii. 10 and its parallels : " And when Jesus heard it " (the Centurion's confession of faith) " He marveled, and said to them that followed Him, " Verily, I say unto you, I have not found such faith, no, not in Israel ! " He expected more faith of His neighbours and disciples than they evinced, but He was surprised to find such faith in those who were quite without the circle of either His teachings or influence. The same surprise utters itself in the presence of Nathanael : " Behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile ! " And still again when the Syrophœnician woman's reply illicit the exclamation : " O woman, great is thy faith ! Be it unto thee even as thou hast said. " He cannot hide His disappointment in His privileged followers, nor His delight in those without who are appreciative and responsive, but both feelings leap forth into language, despite Himself. Is not all this repeated to-day in heaven ? With how many of us must He be disappointed, whilst

His heart is kindled with satisfaction and joy by the answering faith of many who have not had our training and have not shared our relation to Him. What, my brother, is the emotion that springs in Jesus' heart as He follows you forth upon the daily round of your life, back and forth to business, out among your society friends, through your amusements and recreations, and aside into your hours of unobserved privacy and thought? Are you disappointing Him? Or are you His crown of rejoicing? Is He pleased or grieved with you? It is a terrible thing to prove a disappointment to one's mother, or wife, or friend, or benefactor; but it is inexpressibly worse to be a standing disappointment to Jesus Christ.

IV. We are best introduced to the fourth group of Christ's exclamations by the record of St. Matthew xxvi. 37: "And He began to be sorrowful and very heavy"—the sorrow of a heart ready to break and soon after this did break. Again and again His stricken soul seems to find relief in exclamation. "Oh, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup

pass from Me!" "I thirst!" "Woman, behold thy son!" "It is finished!" "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!" Every utterance of His upon the cross was an exclamation. Do you know the import of this? Is it not a disclosure of the bitterness of our Lord's atoning anguish, an anguish so deep, so keen, so poignant, that the only language it could find in which to utter itself was the explosive and ejaculatory? He who attends unto these outcries from the cross may hear in them, through them, the heaving breast and throbbing heart of the expiring Christ, and, hearing them, will find it impossible to deny to Him who thus suffered in order to redeem us his undivided devotion, and his unhesitant obedience.

Thus it appears that the exclamations of Jesus, whatsoever their character or wheresoever spoken, address an irresistible appeal to the love and obedience of men. They speak to us with a directness and emphasis all their own. It is as if they gathered up the heart-life of Christ and focused it all upon our souls.

## XII

### THE MINISTRY OF HOPE

*“For we are saved by hope.”—ROMANS viii. 19.*

**T**HERE are three cardinal graces, according to St. Paul's enumeration—faith, hope, and charity, or love. Hope, being betwixt and between the other two in the triplet, has been slow in coming to its own. And yet it is the indispensable link that binds the other two together. Faith issues into hope, and hope is the inlet of love. Where faith is wanting, hope ceases to glow, and without hope love's impulse and inspiration die out.

Hope has a function peculiar to itself. Love deals with both worlds, the seen and the unseen. We love our brother whom we have seen and thereby learn to love God whom we have not seen. But both faith and hope deal only with the unseen world, though in different ways. Faith reaches out and

takes hold of the unseen present, while hope leaps forward and fastens upon the unseen which is yet to come. Was not Isaac Watts nodding a bit when he began the hymn?—

“ 'Tis by the faith of joys to come  
We walk through deserts dark as night.”

Should it not be?—

'Tis by the hope of joys to come.

Washington Gladden expresses the idea with exactness in his now world-famed hymn:

“ In hope that sends a shining ray,  
Far down the future's broadening way.”

Two things are promised us of God—grace and glory. Faith appropriates the grace which is now offered us. Hope apprehends and anticipates the glory which is to be given us in the hereafter. For that reason its symbol is a torch flaming in the night, or more often a star shining from out the darkness. Faith sets the star there, but

hope causes the star to shine and keeps it shining.

What are the supreme objects of the Christian's hope? Paul points them out in this optimistic eighth of Romans, disclosing to us a conjunction of stars whose combined light forms a glow in the heavens above us and illumines the path which we are traveling upon the earth. Each star is shown by Paul, as it should be, against a contrasting background.

I. The first to be seen is *the star of our personal redemption*—the deliverance that shall be ours when Jesus comes again and we are glorified in Him and by Him. This star is set against the dark background of suffering humanity and therefore made to seem all the more bright and luminous. "If so be that we suffer with Him." That "if" is not conditional, but concessional. He does not say, "should we perchance suffer," but "if we suffer, as suffer we must." Again, "for I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall

be revealed in us." Two kinds of suffering are pointed out. The suffering attaching inherently to our sinful humanity—the ills that are common to all by reason of our fallen estate, and the suffering into which we step when we become the followers of the suffering Jesus, being delivered therefrom by suffering with Him. Or stated sharply, one is suffering because of sin; the other suffering in order to holiness. We are to meet and pass through this not as the stoic would, by stolidly bracing ourselves against it; nor as the Buddhist does by schooling ourselves to be indifferent to it; but as the Christian should by turning our eyes to the star that shines out from the midst of it, and sending our hearts forward to the glory which is to succeed it, and of which it is but the forerunner and preparation. Two things the apostle says of that glory by way of seeking to brighten our hope. It is to be revealed in us and it is to glorify us together. And the result is to be fourfold :

(1) Emancipation. "Delivered from the



bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." We shall emerge from this régime of suffering into one of freedom and favour.

(2) Evolution. The marginal reference is to 1 Peter i. 7: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." The effect of our suffering with Christ is to be development of character. As Peter elsewhere states it: "And the God of all grace after that ye have suffered a little while, shall perfect, stablish, strengthen you."

(3) Equalization. "Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." And how? "If so be that ye suffer with Him. That ye may also be glorified together."

(4) Exaltation. The glory shall be revealed in us. It shall flood and fill our being, which will mean our final triumph and coronation.

Surely to keep one's eye and heart fixed upon that unfading star is to "give hope,"

to use a phrase of Channing's "a happy place in the heart."

" Hope, like the glimmering taper's light,  
Adorns and cheers the way.  
And still, as darker grows the night,  
Emits a brighter ray."

II. The second star here shown in conjunction is the promise of *creation's final redemption*. "Because the creature (creation) itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." And the background against which this star is seen is as black as the other: "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together until now." "For we know"—he states it as a matter of universal and undisputed consciousness. Is he not right? Observation discloses it. Investigation confirms it. Everywhere is found the evidence of this nature-wide suffering. Animals prey upon each other. Plant life is ravaged and dies. Tooth and claw are at work producing universal carnage. Fittingly it is called a groaning and travailing together. All the effect

of man's sin. When he fell he dragged the world down with him. Nature has been marred and dimmed by his great transgression, stained through and through and robbed of its pristine glory. But through it all a star of hope shines on undimmed and never setting. "The earnest expectation of the creature (creation) waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." When man shall return to his forfeited sonship and stand forth before the universe, then the universe shall catch his glory and reflect it forth. "Behold I create new heavens and a new earth." The day of our redemption shall prove the day of Nature's restoration. This is the day to which science is looking forward, when the process of evolution shall finally lead to perfection. This is the day towards which the poet sings his way :

" One God, one law, one element,  
And one far-off, divine event  
To which the whole creation moves."

Shall the people of the Lord forget to watch for its coming, dropping their eyes downward till the star is shut out of their

vision? Nay, nay. As faith has placed the star up yonder in the dark, so shall faith in Jesus Christ and the all-embracing, all-transforming power of His cross keep our eyes lifted towards it and preserve within our breasts the expectation of His coming to redeem the world itself as well as all who dwell upon it.

III. But there is a third star which Paul's telescope magnifies to us. It is the expectation of *the Church's final triumph and consummation*. "Waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God"—those whom He has adopted and owns as sons. And the same dark background is behind this star also: "And not only they but ourselves, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

"The adoption, that is the redemption of our body," what meaneth that? The dropping of the limitations peculiar to our bodies—mortality, decay, disease, decrepitude; carnality, passion, lust; sensuality, dependence

upon and thralldom of the senses. When Jesus comes in His consummation the sons of God are to be delivered from the weakness and the weariness of the flesh, from the bondage and blindness of the material, and stepping out of this shall have the liberty of the sons of God. What a day to anticipate! How it should fire every breast and light up every soul! After a mine explosion in Cornwall they found pinned to the coat of one of the victims a paper on which he had scribbled: "No more toil in the darkness." When Jesus comes, beloved, there will be no more toil, no more struggle, under these fleshly limitations. Ours shall no longer be a body of humiliation but a body purified and glorified. We shall cease to be fighting saints and become saints victorious. The Church shall become a body of believers made perfect, "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing," which the Lamb shall openly crown as His bride before all the inhabitants of the worlds.

Let us ever keep the whole three stars thus in conjunction in sight and hold our eyes up

to them. Hope for the day of the Lord as the day of personal deliverance ; as the day of creation's redemption ; and as the day of the Church's emancipation and coronation, and with patience wait for it. So shall power to endure to the end, courage, assurance, cheer and even joy be aboundingly ours, and we prove to ourselves and exemplify to others the saving power of hope.

“ Forward be our watchword,  
Steps and voices joined ;  
Seek the thing before us,  
Not a look behind ;  
Burns the fiery pillar  
At our army's head ;  
Who shall dream of shrinking,  
By our Captain led ?  
Forward through the desert,  
Through the toil and fight :  
Jordan flows before us,  
Zion beams with light ! ”

### XIII

#### CHRIST'S MODERN REINCARNATION

*"So also is Christ."*—I CORINTHIANS xii. 12.

THESE four words are golden, standing out before you as if they had been embossed instead of printed upon the sacred page. One has to read again and again the verse at the close of which they stand, before he can catch their meaning, and even then he is hesitant about it. As you come down through the verse you are expecting it to end with the word "Church," and to your surprise you confront instead the word "Christ." Did not the apostle's pen slip at this point? If good Homer nods, why should not even Paul sometimes blunder?

Quite the opposite of that! Paul never made a more carefully guided stroke of his pen than when he wrote down these words. It is the only time in all the Bible that the

Church is called Christ, but it was plainly intentional and the intention is significant.

The two were so closely associated in Paul's mind as to be to him synonyms. Not that the one merely suggested the other or stood intimately related to the other—that is not it; but that the two were actual counterparts. To him the risen Christ was so much a part of the life of the Church and the Church so much a part of Christ's post-resurrection life that the two were interchangeable.

What a conception of the Church! There is nothing nobler or truer anywhere, and that, I am aware, is saying much. There are several beautiful representations of the Church in the New Testament. For example, she is spoken of repeatedly as the Bride of Christ; and how winsome the figure! She has been chosen of Jesus to be the special object of His love, to which He has plighted His eternal troth, and which He has promised openly to own and crown in the great day of His consummation.

The Church is also referred to as His pur-



chased possession, which He loved so supremely as to give His life therefor, and over which He claims absolute ownership and control.

More unique and striking than either of these is Paul's representation of the Church as a theatre. "For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and to men." The word which he originally used was not spectacle but theatre, and the translators have accordingly placed it on the margin of the epistle. That is to say, Paul conceived of the Church as a kind of stage where Christ is being impersonated, where the principles of His teaching are being acted forth in the presence of the inhabitants of both worlds. You may go elsewhere to see others act, is his thought, but others come here to see you act.

Far more significant and inspiring than any of these, however, is the representation of the Church, here implied, as Christ's counterpart, His manifestation, His embodiment and reflection, "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person."

Jesus said to His disciples that night in the Upper Room : "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." The Church, according to Paul, should be saying to the world with equal confidence : "He that hath seen me hath seen Jesus Christ." In other words, before His resurrection, Jesus was known to the world through the person and life of one man ; now He is known through the persons and lives of a company of men. The incarnation has not terminated ; it still continues, only now He tenants several bodies instead of one.

Of course, one recognizes this at once as an indirect, one might almost say, an incidental statement of the truth peculiar to Paul, that the Church is the Body of Christ. A noble yet solemn figure, when you stop to contemplate it. Going back to glory, Jesus took His human body with Him—the same and yet not the same, but spiritualized and glorified. Returning to the earth in the Spirit and naturally seeking another body, He conferred that honour upon the Church, being born in that body on the Day of Pente-

cost, as truly as He had been born in the other at the Advent. Through His body, therefore, His spirit now finds its expression and manifestation. The Church is Christ's face, emitting the light of His glorious presence into the world. His mind graciously expressing His thought concerning us. His heart still beating in sympathy and love for our race. His hand outstretched in helpfulness to man. His voice calling the world to repentance—"The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." His feet swift with messages, bent upon loving errands from Him.

All this Paul epitomizes and emphasizes by substituting the name of Christ for that of the Church, and speaking of the Church as if it were the only Christ now known or knowable to men. "In thy face," said Bunsen to his wife when dying, "I have seen Eternity." Whenever the world looks upon the Church it ought to behold even more of such a reflection and be able to say: In thy face I have seen the Eternal One.

Does the Church of to-day need anything so much as a realization of this, its duty and

mission? What in all her history is more pitiful than her recent sale of her birthright? Shall I thus describe it, or shall I call it a loss of her true self-consciousness? Name it as you may, two things have come to pass as the result of it. Within her walls there is a lessening deference for her authority, a weakening attachment to her institutions and a less and less positive response to her claims. Without, there is waning prestige and influence, and waxing criticism and opposition. How different from the universal attitude these days to Jesus Christ! Everywhere men honour His character and bow to His authority. He has a firmer hold upon the admiration and affection of our age than all other leaders of men combined. But His Church, that ought to be His representative and counterpart, is being everywhere aspersed and rejected. Never was there a more religious age than ours. Men think and talk more about immortality than ever before. Atheism is well-nigh unheard of among us. But, while it is essentially a religious age, it is far from being an ecclesi-

astical age. That word is now an offense to most people. Modern ministers shrink from being styled ecclesiastics, there being a smack of cant and hypocrisy about it. It was not originally so. As first used, the title bore the highest and noblest meaning. "Ecclesia"—the called out; called out by Christ, with Christ, for Christ. What distinction could be more honourable? Had the Church merited the distinction, the name would not have taken on its present stigma. It is her members that have dragged that name down into the dust. The sin of the modern Church is an objective instead of a subjective consciousness. She is the body of Christ only theoretically. She conceives of herself as an institution rather than an incarnation—an organized body of believers and not, as she should regard herself, the mystical, visible Body of Christ. Only let her get back to Paul's idea and climb up to Paul's ideal, and she will instantly resume her native attractiveness and regain her former influence.

What is involved in this task? What is

incumbent upon the Church if she would make herself the reminder, the reflection, the reincarnation of Jesus Christ?

I. She must better produce the character of her Founder and Head. This she cannot do perfectly; it could not be expected, for her members are as yet fallibly human; but to them this is possible, at least approximately and, within their native limits, creditably. A great European writer recently gave to the public this sweeping arraignment of the Church: "The Christianity of to-day is a misrepresentation and a misinterpretation of its Founder." None of us would applaud so wholesale a condemnation as that, but, in all honesty, we must confess that it utters more truth than falsehood. Is the character of the average churchman radically different from that met with out in the world? No one will question that it ought to be, and no one can affirm that it was not such in the early days of Christianity. That was the chief credential of the primitive Church. Is it so now? In exceptional cases, perhaps, but far from

generally, and the Church has lost proportionately in prestige and favour.

A great modern preacher has told us in an interesting way how, dissatisfied with his ministry, realizing deeply the failure of his Church to reach the community about it, day after day upon his knees he asked God to show him what to do, and finally came the message direct and clear, "Live the life! Live the life!" The Church is now asking God what it can do to win back its old position of respect and command, and the answer she receives is unequivocal: "When you live a more winsome life before the world, you will begin to do a more winsome work in the world." "Would that I had Henry Martyn's power!" exclaimed an English prelate, and his companion replied: "Live Henry Martyn's life, and you shall have Henry Martyn's power." Oh! brethren of the ministry who hear me, when men can say of us what Pitman of Durham said of his old vicar: "You can't shake hands with that man without feeling he is filled with the Holy Ghost;" oh! my brethren of the laity, when

others testify of you as did the young woman of one of our modern American saints : "Jesus is more real, more attractive, and more irresistible to me every time that man comes to our home"—then this substitution of Christ's name for that of the Church, instead of seeming an awkward and, perhaps, unintentional slip, will be a thing so truthful and natural that, mingling with us, people of the world will be reminded of Jesus, attracted to Jesus, and brought into love with Jesus.

"Christ's, I am Christ's, and let the name suffice you.

Ah ! for me, too, He greatly has sufficed.

Lo ! with no winsome words would I entice you,  
Paul has no honour and no friend but Christ."

II. The second part of this great task given the Church to realize is the fuller manifestation of the Spirit of Christ. What was that Spirit? One word will describe it—love, a love which had been but little among men before and then only as "the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world" had penetrated its darkness.

Reading over the Gospels the other day for



a new and massed impression, I was struck with the frequent recurrence of the word "compassion" in the record of Christ's life. It is a rich, strong word, expressing far more than we ordinarily recognize. Read it, "Jesus suffered with the multitude," and you will get some faint idea of its meaning. Not what Mrs. Humphrey Ward calls the "horrible pain of sympathy," but a passion so delicious and relishable that bearing another's burdens was like recreation and doing good a luxury. How little of such "suffering with" mankind is there in the modern Church! We may occasionally suffer in thought with the sick in the hospital ward or with little children born to live in squalor and poverty, but actual suffering, suffering in spirit and body with the poor, with men out of work, with the fallen and vicious, with the submerged and unlovable, is the rarest possible thing in any of our churches. "When I am in distress," said a man to me the other day, "my lodge sends some one to see me, but the church is wholly indifferent to my condition. The minister

may call, but no one else does, and my first impulse, if I needed relief, would be to apply to my order and not to the church." Contrast that with the common people's feeling towards Jesus when He was on earth. The troubled and needy ran to Him as their best friend. As Professor Peabody has said: "He lavished His care on single, obscure and unresponsive lives." No one has better expressed it than the old divine who declared: "God had but one Son and He made Him a minister." And what a ministry of love and tenderness did He exercise! What was said under human limitations of John Howe upon his death could be affirmed of Jesus without qualification: "He was a mighty lover of God and man."

Not until the Church is such a lover of humanity will it creditably represent its Founder, or justify its right to the title of the Body of Christ.

III. And this third duty is laid upon the Church: If she would prove herself the incarnation of Christ, she must share more fully and truly His purpose and passion.

That purpose He Himself defined: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Searching for souls was His supreme mission and the motive that prompted it a passion for men's spiritual, eternal well-being. To what extent, think you, does the Church share its Founder's soul-saving purpose? There is a great deal of talk everywhere these days about soul-winning, but is not the major part of it theoretical and negative? The indifference of the Church to the unsaved that live about it is the most contradictory, the most un-Christlike thing about it.

I heard a Southern minister say recently that the difference between the North's interest in the negro and that of the South could be stated about thus: "The North loves the negro as a race and cares little for him as an individual; while the South loves the negro as an individual and gives him an affectionate place in the life of the home, but despises him as a race, fearing nothing so much as his amalgamation with the white man." Something of the same distinction

marks the Church's present attitude towards the unsaved. It is tremendously interested in the millions of China and India and Africa, and has much to say about them ; whereas a servant in the home, a neighbour on the same street, a clerk down in the office is neglected, if not overlooked. Not until our evangelistic attitude ceases to be theoretic, general, remote, and becomes practical, personal and individual, can the Church be said to share its Founder's purpose or to have become its Founder's worthy representative.

Now and then you find one who has the true passion unrestrained, like the brilliant lawyer who, converted in one of our recent revivals, refused to go back to his profession, but asked, instead, to be sent up into the logging camps of Northern Wisconsin, and is there devoting his life to the evangelization of that neglected class ; or like the man from the lodging house quarter who was born again in our own Church and began at once a mission to men in the lodging houses ; or like that sweet little woman, who, pitying her fallen sisters, stands night after night upon a

soap box in the red light district preaching Jesus Christ to the victims of lust that congregate there, not infrequently taking a repentant girl to her home and patiently winning her back to purity and womanhood. Yes, there are a few such, thank God ! But most church members are not saying a word, doing a deed, taking a step, or lifting a finger to redeem a friend, a neighbour or even a stranger. Only the other day I received a letter from the wife of a college professor who, having heard me plead with the students for more personal work, resolved to begin it and was used of God that very night to bring one of the students to Christ. She then sat down and wrote me saying : " I have been a Christian for years, but this was my first attempt at personal work and my success shows me how much of my duty has gone undone and how large an opportunity been hitherto unused." Thousands must make the same confession, and in making it they will confess the chief reason why the Church and Christ are not to the modern world synonyms and counterparts.

God help all our churches to set this three-fold ideal before them and to become in very truth Jesus Christ's reflection and reincarnation in the modern world.

“ Oh, make Thy Church, dear Saviour,  
A lamp of burnished gold,  
To bear before the nations  
Thy true light as of old.  
Oh, teach Thy wandering pilgrims  
By this their path to trace,  
Till clouds and darkness ended,  
They see Thee face to face.”

## XIV

### CHRISTIANITY'S SUPERMAN

*"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."*—EPHESIANS iv. 13.

FROM the very moment it began to be, the human race has been chiefly concerned with its destiny. What is man to become finally? Is his future—if he is to have a future—to be an advance or a decline? Whither are we tending, upward or downward?

As man has cast about for a reply to this vital question, five answers have come to him. The first is the answer of paganism. The second the answer of science. The third the answer of æsthetics. The fourth the answer of society. The fifth the answer of Christianity.

I. Paganism answers concerning man's future—I am speaking here not of the indi-

vidual but of the race—that it is to bring him down to the level of the beasts. Its dictum upon this point finds expression in the Egyptian Sphinx, that majestic and graceful, but weird and awesome image of the desert, with a human head but the body of a beast, and, therefore, having its face turned not towards the Nile, the object of hope and promise and advancing life, but towards the trackless, dismal, doomful desert. That sentiment works itself out in India and other parts of the Far East in a belief in the transmigration of souls, teaching men to believe that in the next dispensation they will have the misfortune to tenant the body of pigs, or bears, or horses, or some other member of the bestial order. Strange to say, that answer has been accepted by thousands of our race, who dread the day of their death with unutterable revulsion of soul, and a few unbalanced minds of the Occident, caught in the meshes of religious error, have become enamoured of it. But in an enlightened age like ours this belief can make only the slowest headway.

II. Next comes the answer of science.



Darwin was, perhaps, the first to formulate it and the moment it was formulated it sprang into great popularity. Humanity is passing through an evolution which began at its inception, and will not end until its product shall be the survival of the fittest, an order as much higher than present man as present man is higher than the beasts from which he sprang. As yet this is no more than a theory. Evolution of species into higher forms of the same species all accept, but, since no one has been able to find the missing link between the ape and man, we have no proof or likelihood that justifies us in believing that we can pass on into another order. This answer breaks down at its most vital point, and, while it may be advanced as a guess, it cannot be accepted as a conclusion.

III. The third answer I have called the answer of æsthetics, because the artist, I fear, was responsible for its framing. He came into the habit of painting future man—the man of the celestial world—with wings, and when man once saw himself with a pair of wings he was vain enough to want to adopt

them. It did not take long, therefore, for the Church to encourage the idea and soon it began to teach its children to sing,

“ I want to be an angel,  
And with the angels stand,  
A crown upon my forehead,  
A harp within my hand.”

This answer continued to sway the Church until a half century ago, when, reason rising into supremacy, and science affirming that thus far it had no evidence that one order of being could pass on and become another, it was abandoned.

IV. It was left for the first decade of the twentieth century to formulate a fourth answer, as curious as it is repulsive, as base as it is preposterous. I have denominated it the answer of modern society, for such it is, though one who can be taken as scarcely more than a freak or a pervert has formulated it. Three times I have gone over Bernard Shaw's *Superman*, each time to be more mystified and disgusted than before. His appalling theory is that marriage as con-

ventionally insisted on to-day is the greatest foe to human progress; that, if a man could be left free to ignore the marital relation, the race would be developed into something higher than were possible under the present social order. According to him, humanity's superman will be one of free love, untrammelled passion, and unrestricted habits of life. To read the book is to reject it. These are some of the maxims. They speak for themselves: "The golden rule is that there are no golden rules." "Marriage is popular because it combines the minimum of temptation with the maximum of opportunity." "Beware of a man whose God is in the skies."

Enough of that! No one but the inmates of either an insane asylum or a brothel are at all likely to believe in Bernard Shaw's *Superman*.

V. The fifth answer Jesus Christ has framed. It was foreshadowed by the religion of Israel, but it remained for Christianity to give it the highest and noblest expression. Paul here summarizes it in a verse

which has become memorable. First, let us look for its divisional lines.

Standing out above all is the fact that the future's superman is to be a *man*. Humanity will stay human. "Till we all come unto a perfect man." We are not to transmigrate into beasts; we shall not undergo a metamorphosis and turn angels. We are to continue men. The species persists. God will never tire of the mould. He acted wisely when He made man, and crowned him with glory and honour.

We are but little lower than the angels now. And we may be a great deal higher than the angels hereafter, but we shall not become amalgamated with them. Who is not glad of that? I wouldn't become an angel if I could. Humanity is good enough for me. I sometimes think it is too good for me. I do not deserve such an inheritance. When I contemplate my body with all its intricate organism, my mind with its marvelous outreach, my soul with its mighty deeps I cannot fathom, my spirit with its imagination, its intuitions, its affinities, its

aspirations, I am a million miles away from the ode of the Russian poet, who paints me as an "atom in the balance, a drop of water in the sea, a cipher placed against eternity"; and I am close up to Richard Henry Dana's apostrophe,

" . . . . Man, thou art great,  
Celestial voices hymn it to thy soul."

I am proud to be a man now, and I want to be a man always.

Christianity's superman a man; yes, and a *full-grown man*. The word *perfect* here, is in the Revised Version *full-grown*. That means mature, completely developed. What won't my mind be when fully developed? What grasp upon the truth it will have then! What will my conscience be when fully developed? No pendulum oscillating between right and wrong. No compass whose deviations must be corrected. Surely, man will then fulfil Sir Thomas Browne's requirement and be "honest in the dark and virtuous without a witness." What will not my soul be when full-grown? Its affections, capabil-

ities, its sensibilities, its yearnings for God, its purity, its holiness—all perfected !

A full-grown man, perfectly balanced and symmetrical, with no defects, no unrounded corners, no sharp and unsightly angles, no faults, no failings, no foibles—my imagination cannot run nor fly that far.

Christianity's superman, then, is a man, a full-grown man—yes, and a *Christ-man*. “Unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” What piling up of words ! Meyer, the German commentator, after explaining and expanding its meaning, sums it all up in the one clause, “Just as perfect as Christ was.” One word sums it up for me—Christlikeness. In character—that means holiness. Like Him in spirit—that means love. Likeness in person—that means beauty and grace. Likeness in aim—that means doing always the things that please God. Likeness in facility and resource—that means omnipotence. Look at the Man of Galilee, perfectly simple, genuine, pure, kindly, unselfish, and obedient and true, and you behold Christianity's Superman. Man not tied to

the beasts but robbed of all that is bestial ; not made like an angel but something better than an angel, emancipated from a custom-rid age and enjoying the glorious liberty of a Son of God, having a glorified body, a redeemed conscience, a renewed soul, a perfect mind—all under the control, as in Christ's case, of a spirit completely pure and holy.

When shall this superman come to be? It could come to be to-morrow if God had His way. He has been trying for years to get the statue done, but as fast as He chisels we hew it to pieces. God's will is not in the way. He has had the same will since He spoke our race into being and He has patiently held to His plan and purpose through all the æons since. It is man's will which is hindering Him. As men yield their wills to the Divine Will the work hastens. You and I may come to it long before the race does. Therefore, while He is still struggling with man here below, we may be in heaven with the goal already attained and be wearing the image of the perfect man. Hence the Apostle's injunctions. There are four of these.

I. "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine." Translated into every-day language, that reads: Be serious. Take life earnestly. Adopt God's model and begin to chisel. *Be sure to face the goal.*

II. "That henceforth ye walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind." That is to say: Seek a new studio in which to work. Let the soul have its true atmosphere. Work where the light falls. *Set out at once for the goal.*

III. "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind." Change your chisel, in other words. Let God handle the mallet for you. Make God your sculptor and permit Him to work within while you work without. *Accept His push towards the goal.*

IV. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you with all malice: And be ye kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Let me adapt this



also to our figure. Detach the marble from the ledge and roll it into the workshop. Get rid of the hindrances. Give yourself a chance. *Put off the shackles which otherwise will keep you from making the goal.*

Paul followed these rules and closely approached the type on earth. So did John. So did Peter. So did Augustine. So did à Kempis. So have thousands of others. And when death came they found themselves bearing His likeness. Let us adopt the same method and we shall attain the same high end. "I shall be satisfied, when I awake with Thy likeness."

## XV

### STRAIGHTENING THE CURVES

*“ And make straight paths for your feet lest that which is lame be turned out of the way.”*—HEBREWS xii. 13.

I HAVE it upon good authority that when one of the great trunk railroads of the East was first built, the engineer was paid for his work by the mile. It being to his interest to make the course as long as possible, he introduced into the road-bed a great many unnecessary curves. The result was that the speed of all trains was reduced, the wear and tear upon the rolling stock was greatly increased and liability to accident multiplied many fold.

After the lapse of several years the directors very wisely decided to eliminate these curves. It would involve a vast outlay, but they believed that in the end it would be of incomputable advantage to their road. And it has been. To-day as you ride in its

magnificent express trains, you are as safe and comfortable as modern railroading can make you, and you have practical proof that the company's reputation of having the finest road-bed in the world is fully justified.

Hosts of people, unfortunately, adopt this railroad engineer's course and introduce unnecessary curves into the track their lives must follow. And with the same threefold result. There is immense wear and tear upon their characters, liability to temptation is increased, and their progress towards righteousness seriously retarded.

Jesus cannot make His triumphant entry into our lives until these curves are straightened. Therefore, the prophet's injunction to those who would receive Him was "Make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Nor can we make any substantial advance in the imitation of Christ's character or the attainment of His grace until these curves are out of the way. Hence the apostolic injunction: "Make straight paths for your feet lest that which is lame be turned out of the way."

The railway discovered the superfluous curves in every section of the road. Our inspection is likely to result similarly. How many disastrous curves men introduce into their domestic lives. They are fretful and ill-tempered at home. Everybody there must study their comfort and ease. They bring their worries home with them at night, or having expended all their physical energy in the work of the day, they are restless and nervous, and hard to get on with. Some member of the family is faultfinding. Or jealousy enters and throws a bend into the track. What wonder that when the home life strikes one such curve, it is thrown completely off the track. Happiness is flung aside, the family altar hurled off the track, husband and wife become estranged and the children go to the bad. Divorce is almost always traceable to a curve introduced at the start in the life of the home.

Then there are social curves that all the while tend to imperil one's spiritual life and conduce to moral ruin. Conviviality, polite drinking, social gambling, playing for money

and not collecting the balances—these are curves that wreck thousands of lives. Many a drunkard began his downward course sipping wine at a fashionable dinner. Many a prostitute dates her ruin back to the loose standards in vogue among her society friends. Many an embezzler learned his art about the card table of a social leader. God pity the young man or woman who strikes any one of a thousand curves that worldly folk are building these days into the track of society !

And are there no commercial curves that need eliminating? What of the tricks of trade that are so freely played in all lines of modern business? What of the item allowed the commercial man for treating by even the best of houses? “Get us business and we’ll ask you no questions,” is the instruction of the majority of wholesale houses. In the business world of to-day truth is trampled under foot, honour thrown to the winds, honesty made a byword, and the golden rule broken into splinters. What wonder that a young man having to round

such curves as these is hurled into early moral ruin, and before he is fairly started upon his career finds himself behind the bars, or is obliged to flee the country and live where he is not known.

Religious curves, too, are often allowed to enter the track of life and will play the worst of havoc until they are removed. Sabbath-breaking is such a curve. Irregular church attendance another. Neglect of prayer yet another. Religious inactivity, censoriousness, strife and insincerity fall into the same class. Nothing will throw a soul from the track like careless religious habits. "What harm is there," you ask, "in traveling, or playing golf, or motoring on Sunday?" This harm, my brother, that you cannot do any of these things long and stay on the religious track. You are bound to have your spiritual life thrown into the ditch and expire unless you keep these curves out of the course you are traveling. Why do so many church members lapse? Why has the drift out of the church become in our day a freshet? Why are there in all our churches

so many who have a name to live and are dead? Because they have had too many secular, pleasure-loving, self-seeking curves to round.

Well, suppose upon inspection one finds that curves have got into his life. What is he to do? What the Eastern railroad did—determine upon eliminating them. It will cost him dearly, of course, but it will fully repay him in the end as it did the railway directors.

And how shall he go about it? Let him follow their example here also. Did they put on kid gloves and, taking crowbars and sledges, go out and undertake the job themselves? What folly! Had they been guilty of that, they would have made the track more crooked than it was before. Nor did they order out the office force and set them to the work. What did they know about it? Such a course would have wrecked all the trains and thrown the road into bankruptcy in less than a week. What did they do? They employed the best engineer they could find and made him responsible. And the

work was done efficiently, expeditiously, successfully.

That is what any one of us must do if we would get the curves out of our hearts and lives. Call in an expert. And who shall he be? There is but one reliable, competent engineer in the spiritual realm. Jesus Christ can straighten any curve that a man has allowed to come into his life, and He is the only one that can.

Do not take the crowbar of respectability, or the sledge of human energy, or the wrench of resolution, and try yourself to get the curves out. Hand over the entire thing to Christ. He will assume it and at once. Some engineers can take on only a limited number of contracts, and even then their fulfillment of a contract is slow and subject to all manner of delays; but Jesus refuses none—and what is more, He pushes the work immediately to conclusion. It is done both on the dot and on the spot, and when completed, "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and



the rough places plain : And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together : for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

## XVI

### ENTERING THE CLOUD

*“ While He thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them : and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, ‘ This is My beloved Son : hear Him.’ ”—*  
ST. LUKE ix. 34, 35.

THE cloud, the fear, the voice. That is the logical order we would expect, and all had substantially the same origin. Heaven sent the cloud. It was of course unwelcome. The cloud always is. The effulgence which was upon them and which the cloud shut out was much more desirable. But the vision of glory had been long enough theirs. When Peter suggested that they build three tabernacles and stay on the mount, it was clear that the time had come for the radiance to be withdrawn, if for no other reason, that he might come to himself. While he thus spoke, therefore, “there came a cloud and overshadowed them.”

And it was natural that they should fear as

they entered the cloud. A cloud always has an element of mystery about it. It shuts out sight and makes a sharp and sudden demand upon faith. What did they fear? Bodily harm? Catastrophe of some kind? Death? Perhaps all of these. It was a new experience to them and they did not know what to look for. One thing is certain, it broke up their self-content and made them unsettled and afraid.

And when they were in that mood, sensitive, humbled, consciously in need of help—just the mood God desired and planned—there came a voice so clear, so sweet, and yet so authoritative that it was unmistakably from another world, “This is My beloved Son: hear Him.”

Three things that voice did. *It gave prominence to Christ*, lifting their thoughts off themselves and fixing it upon Him. *It bespoke confidence in Christ*. The confidence of heaven in the one whom it had transfigured before them and upon whom it had thus set its imprimatur and seal. And it meant also *a reference to Christ*, pointing them

when in their alarm to the One who alone could reassure and fortify them. And when the voice was past Jesus was found alone, standing there before them, present with them in their distress as He had been in their joy, and ready to give them His defense and succour.

God does much of His work with clouds. Our favourite is the sunshine; His the shadow. When the Israelites were marching out of Egypt, He let down a cloud between them and the sea. When Moses was with Him in the mount, He enwrapped it with a cloud. When the tabernacle was placed, a cloud came and enveloped it and His word to them was, "I will appear in the cloud upon the Mercy Seat." When Jesus ascended a cloud received Him out of their sight, and the Apocalypse thus announces His return: "Behold, He cometh in clouds." How exact was the Psalmist when he sang: "Clouds and darkness are around about Him. Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne."

God's favourite agency now in dealing

with our lives is the cloud. He is still a God that hideth Himself. Human life is all of it a mystery, its beginning and ending and all that lies between having the mist hanging over it. The future He veils from sight. The sorrows He sends, the trials He appoints, throw a shadow over the present path we are traveling. Again and again have we occasion to cry up unto Him: "Thy way is in the sea (trackless), and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known."

And His purpose with the cloud is the same that it was of yore. It is sent to rob us of our self-confidence, to confront us with our defenselessness, to save us from a supine and self-satisfied abode on the mountain top. Fear is one of God's most effective weapons. Its appearance is ominous, while its blade seldom, if ever, cuts. Nothing brings a man to his real self like alarm. The moments when we are afraid are the frankest of our lives. Subterfuge and circumlocution drop instantly away, and what is in our hearts stalks out into sight. Fear puts us on our guard, uncovers to us our weakness, con-

vinces us of our need of help and forces us into humility and dependence. For that reason prosperity is the worst foe a man has, while misfortune turns out at length to be our greatest benefactor. The nights when we are afraid and lie awake listening the robbers never enter. They steal in when, secure with a sense of safety, we have dropped into a dead sleep. The strongest, safest days of my life have been those when a sense of my peril filled me with fear and I did not dare to stir a step alone without God.

That is why God is so fond of using the cloud. It is a fear-generator, and fear is both an ear-opener and an eye-opener. Yes, and a heart-softener. When you are afraid you are going to sink, and usually not until then, you grasp for the rope and hold on with all the strength you have. There is philosophy and religion both in the Psalmist's confession, "What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee."

And when God has aroused and alarmed us, and thereby got us into a mood to listen and ponder, the voice comes from out the unseen world, His voice, pointing us to Jesus

as our sure deliverer, placing authority behind Him and bidding us turn to, depend upon and heed Him. "This is My beloved Son: hear Him." And having thus spoken to us, God withdraws, as He did from the three on the mount, and leaves us alone with Christ. Happy the man who afraid in the midst of the cloud, and humbled by his fear, lifts his faith to Jesus and sends up to Him Peter's cry on Gennesaret, "Lord, save me!" For whatever our need—of comfort or reinforcement or revelation or courage—Christ will meet it and prove Himself our deliverer.

Beloved, do we need to be told that God is letting down a cloud before us as we come up to the opening of another year? Who of us does not find himself drawing back from the uncertainty that marks the future ahead of him? We are like an ocean liner steaming up into a fog. That clause of Philip Doddridge's hymn keeps coming to me over and over again to-day,

"The future all to us unknown."

What changes, New Year, will you appoint

us? The answer is an ominous silence. Its secret is its own and it holds it fast. But who can help thinking of the separations it may bring, the mutations it may work, the devastations it may witness. Alas! Alas! We are all of us, without exception, afraid of the novice that will with a round or two more of the clock crowd from his seat the venerable incumbent with whom we have been dealing for a twelvemonth, and begin to wield with an inexperienced hand the sceptre of time. We are as hesitant about moving out into the mystery of a new year as a captain is to put out to sea on a foggy night.

It is good that we are afraid. A thousand pities that any one in this enlightened land could cross this threshold of the unknown only half himself, with a glass, the worst enemy of the race, brandished in his hand and the yells of fiendish debauchery claiming a monopoly upon his ears. I am glad to walk softly while the last days of the year are passing. Nor can I keep from putting out my hand for help. I instinctively pause and draw back before lifting my right foot



over on to the untried path that lies ahead hidden in the night.

Do not try to laugh the fearful mood off, Christian, and pronounce it unworthy and weak. To be light-hearted, unconcerned, self-confident, hilarious, on the last days of the old year is to set for one's own feet a trap just at the opening of the new. Be willing to have a sober mind through all the New Year season. If you have any other mind, you are in peril. Gird up your loins and step cautiously forward.

Above all, pause and consider. One of our great railways some time ago offered a prize of ten thousand dollars for the best inscription for a sign board at its crossings. The one that won the prize read: "Stop, look and listen."

I put up to-day some such danger signal at the bend of the road leading out into the new year. Stopping will arrest our pace and make us serious and reflective. Looking will report to us the fog and acquaint us with our peril. And listening, we shall hear the voice Divine that always speaks from

out the cloud. I say always, for every cloud is vocal, only oftener than otherwise we have not ears to hear what the spirit saith. Quiet your heart to-day, and the word which you shall hear from out the unknown future shall be, "This is My beloved Son : hear Him." God is now pointing you to Jesus and commending Jesus to you as your alone source of security and strength for the year ahead. Nothing will come to you that He cannot either deliver you from or equip you for.

Do you dread the sorrows and trials that the future may mete out to you? Hear Jesus saying to you : "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee ; and through the waters, they shall not overflow thee ; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

Are you wondering whether any of your loved ones may be taken from you? Hear Him who hath vanquished death and is alive forevermore, saying, "I am the Resurrection," and adding, "Lo, I am with you al-

way, even to the end of the days." "Others may be taken," is His word, "but I shall remain, and, remaining, be sufficient for you." Do you question your ability to endure to the end of the untried year, shrinking back from the thought of its possible perils and temptations and almost forecasting defeat? Listen, and you will hear Him say to you: "Let not your heart be troubled. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but I have overcome the world."

No experience can overtake you for which you will not be equal if you are abiding in Him. St. John's word is truer on New Year's than on any other day of the year: "He that hath the Son hath life."

Make sure, then, to draw up closer to Him these days. Hand your life over to Him more fully than ever. Listen for His word to you as never before. Commit the future completely to Him, and, your fear taking its departure, there will be no cloud too dense for you to penetrate unharmed; no unforeseen emergency you will not be able to face; no tempest you cannot brave; no tempta-

tion you cannot overcome ; no victory you will not win.

Beloved, your hope and mine to-day, your strength and mine, your confidence and mine, must be in Jesus Christ and Him only. If they are not, we are putting out to sea with a doomed vessel. If they are, we can sing with exultant faith :

“ If Christ is mine, then all is mine  
And more than angels know,  
Both present things and things to come,  
And grace and glory, too.

“ If He is mine, I need not fear  
The rage of earth or hell ;  
He will support my feeble frame,  
And all their power repel.

“ Let Jesus tell me He is mine,  
I nothing want beside :  
My soul shall at the fountain live  
When all the streams are dried.”



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